

Animation and Mechanization in the Novels of Charles Dickens

THESIS
presented to the Faculty of Arts
of
the University of Zurich
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by
STEFANIE MEIER
of Tägerig (AG)

Accepted by the Faculty of Arts
on the Recommendation of Professor Max Nänni, Ph.D.

Francke Berne
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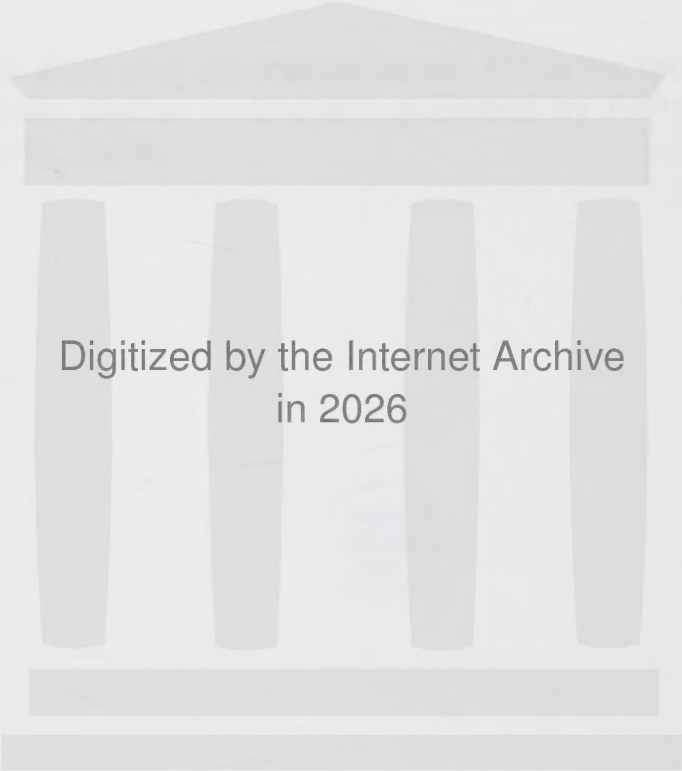
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The Dickens texts quoted in this study are referred to by the following abbreviations:

<u>BH</u>	<u>Bleak House</u>
<u>BR</u>	<u>Barnaby Rudge</u>
<u>DC</u>	<u>David Copperfield</u>
<u>DS</u>	<u>Dombey and Son</u>
<u>ED</u>	<u>Edwin Drood</u>
<u>GE</u>	<u>Great Expectations</u>
<u>HT</u>	<u>Hard Times</u>
<u>LD</u>	<u>Little Dorrit</u>
<u>MC</u>	<u>Martin Chuzzlewit</u>
<u>NN</u>	<u>Nicholas Nickleby</u>
<u>OCS</u>	<u>The Old Curiosity Shop</u>
<u>OMF</u>	<u>Our Mutual Friend</u>
<u>OT</u>	<u>Oliver Twist</u>
<u>PP</u>	<u>Pickwick Papers</u>
<u>TTC</u>	<u>A Tale of Two Cities</u>

<u>SB</u>	<u>Sketches by Boz</u>
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"BL"	"The Battle of Life"
"Ch"	"The Chimes"
"CC"	"A Christmas Carol"
"CH"	"The Cricket on the Hearth"
"HM"	"The Haunted Man"

Why, how much better to be silly, than as wise as you! You don't see shadowy people there, like those that live in sleep - not you. Nor eyes in the knotted panes of glass, nor swift ghosts when it blows hard, nor do you hear voices in the air, nor see men stalking in the sky - not you! I lead a merrier life than you, with all your cleverness.

(Barnaby Rudge)

INTRODUCTION

To write a study on Dickens is an enterprise comparable to the adding of a stone to an intricate and complex piece of mosaic. For so expansive is the field of Dickens-research today that by now most of the essential aspects and features of this author's writing seem to have been delineated and depicted in scrutinizing detail. Nevertheless, there are still gaps in the critical presentation of Dickens's literary work - gaps which have been caused by one-sided or all too limited approaches, and which thus may still render an incomplete picture of that author's literary achievement. It is therefore the intention and aim of this study to fill one of those gaps by focusing on one characteristic feature of Dickens's writing, and to connect thereby various aspects of his literary work as a whole.

The particular feature I have singled out as a topic for this thesis is Dickens's habit of animating objects and of mechanizing human characters, that is to say his way of describing things as if they were living beings and of human beings as if they were lifeless objects. A chair, for instance, will be described in terms of human anatomy by the narrator's reference to its "arms, legs and back" and it will be equipped with the semblance of power to move and act of its own free will by the use of such epithets as "straddling", "kicking", "crouching", or the like. This way of describing things as if they were living people is referred to by means of the term "animation". Conversely, a human being is often described in terms of object-qualities, such as "wooden", "metallic", or by his implicit or explicit comparison to a particular thing. He thus approaches the state of an automaton or a mechanical toy; therefore this reduction of human beings to the object level is here referred to as "mechanization".

This device of animation and mechanization proves to be extremely versatile within Dickens's literary work. Its scope of function ranges from mere embellishing description to the point where animated objects actually become agents and seem to take an active part in the plot; while its stylistic quality and literary expression extends from flippantly burlesque comedy to the profoundest depth of symbolic meaning.

This particular device is indeed so characteristic of Dickens's style that it has been widely recognized as a hallmark of his writing. It is a device which largely contributes to the strong imaginative quality of his work and it is thus an eloquent manifestation of Dickens's immensely creative mind. While most critics regard Dickens's animation of objects and his mechanization of characters in this light, not all of them were able to appreciate this particular product of his imagination. Thus Hippolyte Taine in his Histoire de la littérature anglaise harshly condemns Dickens's use of animistic imagery:

Des métaphores excessives font passer devant l'esprit des rêves grotesques. On se sent assiégé de visions extravagantes... On pense aux fantaisies d'Hoffmann; on est pris d'une idée fixe et l'on a mal à la tête. Ces excentricités sont le style de la maladie plutôt que de la santé. (1)

Taine thus regards Dickens's use of animation and mechanization in a pathological light, and in fact does not hesitate to compare his mind to that of a madman:

La différence entre un fou et un homme de génie n'est pas fort grande... C'est l'imagination visionnaire qui forge les fantômes du fou et qui crée les personnages de l'artiste... L'imagination de Dickens ressemble à celle des monomanes... (2)

While most critics take a more positive attitude towards Dickens's imagination than Taine does, only few have tried to find in his use of animism anything else but an instance of his imaginatively creative energy. One of the first to recognize the potential of deeper meaning inherent in his use of animation and mechanization was Dorothy van Ghent. Her article "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's", and her chapter on Great Expectations (in: The English Novel: Form and Function), which is largely based on the former, represent probably the first full-length discussion of this subject in a more serious light. Indeed, what Mrs. van Ghent focuses on is mainly the demonic quality which the application of this device gives to Dickens's world:

(1) H. Taine, "Dickens", in: Histoire de la littérature anglaise, vol. V (Paris, 1886), pp. 16/17.

(2) Taine, p. 16.

This picture, in which the qualities of things and people were reversed, was a picture of a daemonically motivated world, a world in which "dark" or occult forces or energies operate not only in people ... but also in things. (3)

Animation and mechanization are thus, for Mrs. van Ghent, basically vehicles of aggression. In fact she sees the two interdependent and entwined as in a system of circulation, whereby specific qualities are exchanged on a basis of mutual reciprocity. According to her, objects are animated at the expense of the living human world, which is, in turn, sapped of its quality of life and thus is mechanized into lifeless matter. It is particularly the "inner" life of human beings which Mrs. van Ghent claims is thus transposed into the world of objects:

The principle of reciprocal changes bears on the characteristic lack of complex inner life on the part of Dickens's people... In the art of Dickens ... there is a great deal of "inner life transposed to other forms than that of character... (4)

While Dorothy van Ghent was one of the first critics to recognize that Dickens's use of animation and mechanization contains more than mere embellishment of description, she concentrates almost exclusively on the more gloomy aspects of that topic, thus neglecting Dickens's exploitation of this particular device for the sake of humour and imaginative playfulness.

An altogether rather disparaging study on the subject was made in Priscilla Gibson's article "Dickens's Uses of Animism". She regards the animation of objects as a device Dickens pragmatically resorted to in order to please his audience:

The spectacle of his exuberant spirits animating normally lifeless objects is one gesture toward amusing his audience extraneously that Dickens most consistently relies on. (5)

- (3) Dorothy van Ghent, "On Great Expectations", in: The English Novel: Form and Function (New York, 1953), pp. 128/29.
- (4) Dorothy van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's", in: The Sewanee Review, vol. LXIII, (1950), p. 423.
- (5) Priscilla Gibson, "Dickens's Use of Animism", in: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 7, (1953), p. 285.

She also accuses Dickens of using animism mainly in those places where he knew himself to be weak as a writer, thereby attempting to camouflage his literary shortcomings:

In addition to its obvious use for evoking humor and atmosphere, animism seems more and more to have been relied on, whether consciously or not, at those points where, as a novelist in the usual English tradition, Dickens was, and knew himself to be, most weak. (6)

These weaknesses she perceives particularly in Dickens's inability to construct realistic plots and in his hopeless striving for unity within his novels. She claims, therefore, that Dickens animated the environment connected with a certain character in order to create a unifying symbolic surface in his novels:

For the creation of a symbolic surface, Dickens often animates physical characteristics, clothing, and mere objects in the environment. (7)

Although Mrs. Gibson largely underrates and misjudges the function animism fulfilled in Dickens's novels, she rightly acknowledges Dickens's realistic application of animism in the depiction of a child's mind and his vision of the world - this especially in the first person narrations in David Copperfield and Great Expectations:

... Dickens happily found that his old technique [of animism] could add to the intensity and realism of a first-person projection. The habit of seeing animistically characterizes the imaginative sensitivity and state of mind of the boy Pip. (8)

A study which deals at greater length with the present subjects is Harald Fawknér's dissertation entitled Animation and Reification in Dickens's Vision of the Life-Denying Society. (9) As the title of his thesis suggests, Mr.

(6) Gibson, p. 285.

(7) Gibson, p. 287.

(8) Gibson, p. 287.

(9) Harald W. Fawknér, Animation and Reification in Dickens's Vision of the Life-Denying Society (Uppsala, 1977), p. 6. The term "Reification" used by Fawknér refers to the description of human beings as if they were objects; personally I prefer to use the term "Mechanization" instead.

Fawkner concentrates on the socio-critical implications which animation and mechanization may have in Dickens's novels. For him, Dickens's world is basically a place of conflict between the human and the non-human world, and he sees in Dickens's habit of animating objects and of mechanizing people a vital instrument in the definition of this conflict. This then is the topic of his thesis:

... to demonstrate how, in many varied, subtle, and complex ways, Dickens constantly uses animation and reification - the tension between the human and the non-human - to analyse and describe man's imprisonment in a dehumanizing society. (10)

Fawkner does not consider Dickens's instances of animation and mechanization for their own sake and value. Instead, he starts from his theory of Dickens's life-denying society and selects examples of animation and mechanization which reflect and illustrate that particular theme. Not surprisingly, this approach results in a one-sided representation of the topic and in a serious underrating of its artistic merits; for there is a great part of animating and mechanizing imagery in Dickens which is independent of any socio-critical meaning and which has other functions to fulfil. For this reason, Fawkner's observations are relevant only in the context of a socio-critical study. His claim, for instance, that "... reification illustrates inhumanity and dehumanization in Dickens" (11) holds true only in those instances of mechanization where a social or human weakness is exposed, not, however, on an absolute level. Likewise, he singles out among all the cases of animation those which are particularly gloomy, giving a strongly manipulated and hence subjective description of Dickens's technique of animation and mechanization in order to prove his own theory. While I would in no way deny the essential role which social problems and their consideration play in Dickens's work, I should argue nevertheless that this is merely one aspect of this author's many achievements, and in contrast to Fawkner's thesis, I intend to show how this complexity of Dickens's literary creation is reflected in his use of animating and mechanizing imagery.

(10) Fawkner, p. 12.

(11) Fawkner, p. 148.

The psychological aspect of Dickens's animistic vision is discussed both by Harvey Sucksmith and Geoffrey Thurley from a Jungian point of view, though with differing conclusions. Sucksmith takes Dickens's habit of animating objects and of creating thus a bond of sympathy between the animate and the inanimate world as evidence of his introverted personality:

The rhetoric of sympathy enables Dickens to explore the common bond between all things and to involve the reader in this process of viewing the world as a vital experience, to make him feel his identity with all creation. Not only is animism characteristic of the introverted vision but so also is the awareness of a force which permeates all things, a primitive identity. (12)

If Sucksmith defines Dickens's animistic vision as a symptom for his introversion, Geoffrey Thurley makes a case for proving the exact opposite. For him Dickens's vision reveals the typical characteristics of an extroverted attitude, and the use of animation is quoted in evidence of this thesis:

Dickens was driven primarily by an intense interest in the external world: his metaphoric and analogical procedures are designed to increase perception of the actual, to render more faithfully the appearance of the world, and thereby to make clear its "inner" reality. How often in reading Dickens do we feel, yes, that's exactly what it looks like, how it smells? Dickens, in short, is dominated by the extrovert's object-consciousness, not by the introvert's subjectivity. (13)

The question is no doubt intriguing for anyone interested primarily in Dickens's psyche, but I do not think that it will bring us much further in the appreciation and interpretation of his writing. In the case of a topic such as animation and mechanization we are still confronted with the question of its overall significance and function within Dickens's work.

(12) Harvey Peter Sucksmith, The Narrative Art of Charles Dickens (Oxford, 1970), p. 345. According to Sucksmith it is this introversion of Dickens - manifested by means of his animistic vision - which enables him to adopt a critical view of society and social institutions: "Since introversion withdraws values from objects, it can afford a critical view of the external world from a critical standpoint. The introverted vision is particularly useful, therefore, in examining extraverted forms and relationships. It has a deadly knack of exposing the superficiality of social institutions and social attitudes." (p. 346).

(13) Geoffrey Thurley, The Dickens Myth. Its Genesis and Structure (London & Henley, 1976), p. 7.

What I find highly interesting, however, are the observations Taylor Stoehr makes about Dickens's animistic vision in his book The Dreamer's Stance, a study dealing with the stylistic, structural and thematic correspondence between Dickens's novels and the concept of dream-work. Like Dorothy van Ghent, Stoehr sees a bond of interdependence between the human and the inanimate world in Dickens's novels, each of which is defined in terms of the other. Animation and mechanization, according to Stoehr, thus depend entirely "on the contiguity of characters and the objects which surround them" (14) (an assumption which is justified in many instances, but not in all the cases of animation). This system of external contiguity allows the inanimate world, by word and action, to speak for and comment on the human world. Thus animation of the object world - as Stoehr argues - is a means by which the narrator can remain detached from the setting of his literary world:

This is the technique of a narrator who wishes to remain strictly in the background, and is therefore unwilling to exercise even his prerogative of omniscience. (15)

In keeping with the subject of his thesis, Taylor Stoehr sees Dickens's use of animation as a further essential factor contributing to the dreamlike quality of Dickens's novels:

... the peculiar life and meaning with which these objects are infused gives everything a dreamlike cast. (16)

In refuting other critics' suggestion that Dickens's animation of objects reflects his view of a world gone mad, Stoehr claims that these animations are inserted into a realistic context. He concludes from this that Dickens's animated objects reflect "the madness of reality":

It is madness, we might say, of a world in which we are required to see everything without benefit of point of view, as if there were no ground underfoot. ... The reification of intangibles - mental states,

(14) Taylor Stoehr, Dickens. The Dreamer's Stance (Ithaca, N.Y., 1965), p. 55.

(15) Stoehr, p. 54.

(16) Stoehr, pp. 55/56.

social conditions, future possibilities, and the like - which the animism implements, is not simply magical; there is conviction in it and truth. (17)

It is this quality of fundamental truthfulness which makes Stoehr regard Dickens's use of animism in his novels as a device which is comparable to the rhetoric of dreams. Like a dream image, the image of an animated object (or, conversely, of a mechanized human being) has the effect of simultaneously revealing and concealing its meaning. This is a highly interesting aspect of this subject and I intend to come back to it later in this thesis (cf. chapter 4.3).

Let me now give an outline of my own approach to the topic of animation and mechanization in Dickens's work. My research has been limited to a study of his novels and Christmas books, and does not (with a few exceptions) include his short-stories, his Sketches, nor his articles in Household Words and All the Year Round. It is, after all, particularly his novels, which are the most interesting part of his literary creation, and they represent both a wide and abundant field for the study of his animistic technique.

In a brief first chapter I shall try to point out the variety of aspects which the concept of animism and animistic vision as a whole may embody. Originally a kind of religious Weltanschauung for primitive tribes, it seems to constitute one of those fundamental human impulses which - even after the dawn of the age of enlightenment - has manifested itself in the minds of human beings. Thus Freud declares that all of us go through an animistic phase in our lives and that we carry fragmentary impressions of this with us for the rest of our lives (cf. p. 23). Animistic visions being mainly a product of an imaginative approach to life, it is not surprising that we particularly find its manifestations in the field of art. With respect to literature, this applies for instance strongly to the Romantic movement in England, which emphasized the animation of Nature and the poet's empathy with the living Universe. This "pathetic fallacy", as Ruskin was to term it, reappears with forceful insistence in the writings of Charles Dickens,

who - though a thoroughly Victorian character - might in this respect (as indeed in several respects) be called a late Romantic figure.

The actual study of Dickens's use of animation and mechanization will be embarked on in the second chapter. This chapter will focus primarily on the technical aspect of animation and mechanization, an aspect which has often been neglected or dealt with too superficially by critics. We shall have a close look at the actual process of transforming matter into life and vice versa, and consider all the various ways in which this transformation may be realized. An important function in this respect is played by the rhetorical means by which animation and mechanization are achieved, foremost among them being the figures of metaphor and metonymy.

In a third chapter I shall study the effect resulting from the transposition of life to matter and vice versa within a certain context, and its meaning and function on a literary level. As we shall see, the scope of possible meaning is extremely wide. Thus animation and mechanization may play a part in the creation of playful humour and burlesque comedy; they may also serve as expressions of satirical criticism; they may further be found to contribute to the creation of a grotesque atmosphere; and they are finally provided with a deeply symbolic potential. The categories that I have drawn up here - humour, satire, grotesque, and symbolism - are, of course, in reality not rigidly independent but may overlap a great deal. Thus satire has a lot in common with humour, apart from its specific critical purpose; and the grotesque, with its partial focus on the ridiculous, is also adjacent to the area of humour.

If I have separated these categories, however, it is mainly because they ultimately differ in their literary function - a difference which is, as we shall see, clearly reflected in the various instances of animation and mechanization. As our previous discussion of the present state of Dickens-research shows, furthermore, critics have tended so far to concentrate merely on one literary aspect of Dickens's animistic vision - mostly on the "dark" and grotesque aspect - thus invalidating their observations for a comprehensive study of Dickens's animistic device. By including all the above categories in this chapter, I shall therefore attempt to do justice to

the often underrated complexity of Dickens's stylistic methods and techniques.

In the last chapter I propose to show that animation and mechanization for Dickens were not merely a medium with which he created certain literary effects, but in addition - and this is in my opinion their most important function - they constitute a message of their own. For animistic vision is based upon an imaginative rather than a rational approach to life, and imagination or fancy (to borrow Dickens's favourite term) in his view represents the one redeeming grace for mankind in a utilitarian and thereby mechanizing world. The encouragement and kindling of fancy therefore was one of the chief aims of Dickens as a writer, one that he formulated for instance explicitly in his "Preliminary Word" to Household Words:

In the bosoms of the young and old, of the well-to-do and of the poor, we would tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which, according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished. (18)

In order to show how Dickens equates animistic vision with the preservation of the faculty of imagination or fancy, we shall focus on those of his characters who experience the world in intensely animistic terms. We find them among the majority of his child-characters, and in those of his mad characters who are treated with psychological insight. We also find animistic perception a recurrent feature in characters who are dreaming, and finally we find that animistic vision is shared by all those characters who may be said to be in one way or another involved in the representation, distribution, or creation of art - particularly of literature - and thus embody the poetic principle in life. This study of Dickens's animating characters will show us that in Dickens's view animistic vision ultimately goes together with imagination and art as well as with human kindness, a view which was also expressed in his "Preliminary Word":

(18) Charles Dickens, "A Preliminary Word", in: Household Words, vol. I (Leipzig, 1851), p. 1.

The Stones that call to us have sermons in them, as the trees have tongues, as there are books in the running brooks, as there is good in everything. (19)

It becomes clear from this passage that for Dickens the animation of nature (that is the speaking of stones and trees) is real and inseparable from the creation of literature and art ("books in the running brooks") and from the notion of fundamental goodness. Animation and mechanization (both of which are included in the animistic vision) thus can be seen ultimately as vehicles for Dickens's philosophy, in which art and moral integrity are inextricably entwined.

(19) Dickens, "A Preliminary Word", p. 2.

I ANIMISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON DICKENS

1.1 Animism

This introductory chapter on animism by no means attempts to sum up the phenomenon of animism in all its aspects and manifestations; it rather might be said to offer a random illustration of it. Its sole aim and purpose is to create a certain frame of reference within which our discussion of Dickens's animistic vision may be placed. In giving a very brief consideration to the various fields that are in one way or another connected with the concept of animism, I should like to indicate the universal significance of the topic of animism, and its inextricable link with the history of human thought and expression.

"Animism" is defined as "the belief in innumerable spiritual beings concerned with human affairs and capable of helping or harming men's interests". (1) The general usage of the term goes back to Sir Edward Burnett Tylor's work Primitive Culture (1871), in which he studies and describes the religious behaviour of primitive tribes. In dealing with the question of "the most rudimentary form of religion which may yet bear that name", (2) Tylor defines "the Belief in Spiritual Beings" as the minimum requirement of religion, and he goes on to show how this requirement is fulfilled in animism:

... Animism, in its full development, includes the belief in controlling deities and subordinate spirits, in souls, and in a future state, these doctrines practically resulting in some kind of active worship. (3)

- (1) Cf. "Animism", in: The New Encyclopaedia Britannica/Macropaedia (15th ed.), vol. I, p. 922.
- (2) Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture (London, 1871), vol. I, p. 383.
- (3) Tylor, vol. I, p. 386.

Animistic belief thus points towards, and is based upon, the existence of invisible entities such as souls, deities, demons, and other classes of spirits. In its most rudimentary form, then, religion reflects a view of a world which includes not only physical reality, but a spiritual one as well.

The existence of such a spiritual world was first deduced from man's observations of the states of sleep and death, and by his endeavour to comprehend and explain them. Basing his remarks on Tylor's observations, Sigmund Freud writes in his essay on animism:

How did primitive men arrive at the peculiar dualistic views on which the animistic system is based? It is supposed that they did so by observing the phenomena of sleep (including dreams) and of death which so much resembles it, and by attempting to explain those states, which are of such close concern to everyone. (4)

The essence of this spiritual world, that is "spirit", was then transferred by these primitive people to their physical reality. By means of this transference, natural objects were thus endowed with the possession of souls and with the exertion of energy that might be directed both towards the benefit and the harm of mankind. This primitive religious belief in spiritual beings, which manifest themselves in the physical shapes of trees, rivers, stones, and so forth, is the original form of animism. Tylor called this animistic belief "a crude, childlike, natural philosophy", based on a "doctrine of universal vitality" in which "sun and stars, trees and rivers, winds and clouds, become personal animate creatures". (5)

Tylor's theory of animism as the most elementary form of religion is contradicted among others by Sir John Frazer in his Golden Bough. Frazer holds the conviction that animistic beliefs and practices arose from man's wish to dominate his surroundings by means of magic. For him, animism consisted in man's pragmatic projection of his central needs into the physical world.

(4) Sigmund Freud, "Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thoughts", in: The Complete Psychological Works, ed. James Strachey (London, 1955), vol. XVII, p. 76.

(5) Tylor, vol. II, p. 327.

In other words: natural objects would be worshipped, not simply because they represented the home of a deity, but because man tried to humour that particular deity and thereby ensure his own well-being. The two divergent views on the original function of animism are brought together by Freud when he writes:

So we are not surprised to learn that, hand in hand with the animistic system, there went a body of instructions upon how to obtain mastery over men, beasts, and things - or rather, over their spirits. These instructions go by the names of "sorcery" and "magic". (6)

A feature which reappears, however, both in Tylor's and in Frazer's discussion of animism, is the fact that the spirit living within an object such as a stone or a tree, is credited with a distinctive potential of malevolent energy, an aspect which is intricately connected with animistic beliefs, and one which - as we shall see later - is even prominent in Dickens's literary use of animism.

So far, animism has been identified with the religious behaviour of primitive tribes; this should not deceive us into thinking, however, that it is completely alien to the civilized mind. Thus, in the classical Greek and Roman mythologies, for example, divinity (and thereby personification) was bestowed not only on natural phenomena, such as the sun, the moon, the dawn, the ocean and the rivers, but also on abstract concepts and ideas, such as love, war, death and the like. In this way, man tried to lay hold of those powers on which he knew himself to be physically and emotionally dependent.

Nor is animistic thinking completely extinguished in our own enlightened civilization. Indeed, Géza Róheim calls animism "our mental past", (7) and Freud claims that every human being, whatever his social or cultural background, goes through an animistic phase in his life; he also finds that

(6) Freud, "Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thoughts", p. 78.

(7) Géza Róheim, Animism, Magic and the Divine King (New York, 1930, 1972), p. VI.

there is a definite connection between the traces of this animistic phase and the fascination the uncanny holds for us:

Our analysis of instances of the uncanny has led us back to the old, animistic conception of the universe. This was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings; by the subject's narcissistic overvaluation of his own mental processes; by the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts and the technique of magic based on that belief; by the attribution to various outside persons and things of carefully graded magical powers, or 'mana' as well as by all the other creations with the help of which man, in the unrestricted narcissism of that stage of development, strove to fend off the manifest prohibitions of reality. It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive men, that none of us has passed through it without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as "uncanny" fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression. (8)

The truth of Freud's claim that every human being carries traces of an animistic conception of the world in him, can be corroborated in situations in every-day life, for example by the behaviour of the man who angrily kicks the side of his obstinately immobile car; (9) it is furthermore corroborated by the language we use, which is full of animistic imagery. Tylor observed in this context:

As for our own selves and our feelings, how we still talk of "animal spirits", of being in "good and bad Spirits", only recalling with an effort the long past metaphysics which such words once expressed. (10)

- (8) Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny", in: The Complete Psychological Works, ed. James Strachey (London, 1955), vol. XIII, pp. 240/241.
- (9) An interesting point is the fact that - as a result of our scientific research - we are today surrounded by a remarkable number of technical products which in one way or another display animistic features; take for instance the modern media of transport, such as cars, locomotives, and planes; or the media of communication and entertainment, such as telephone, film, radio and records.
- (10) Tylor, vol. II, p. 166.

Since animism - from its very beginning - reflects man's endeavour to come to terms with the world around him, it is not altogether surprising to find that it has also furnished the basis of a number of philosophical movements. Thus, H.W. Piper in his study The Active Universe - which mainly deals with the Romantic poet's involvement with nature - lists Erasmus, Darwin and Joseph Priestley among those philosophers who had derived their theories from an animistic conception of the world. (11) An interesting contribution to this subject was further made by Jacques Monod in his treatise Chance or Necessity. (12) Like Piper, Monod argues that animism and animistic conceptions were the basis upon which many philosophers (among whom he mentions Hegel and Leibniz) built up their philosophical theories and systems. He finds the generic power of animism even in ideologies which purport to reflect a scientific approach; in particular he quotes Teilhard de Chardin, in whose theory there is essentially no difference between matter and life; the two are connected by an evolutionary link. But, as Monod points out, this contiguity of evolution from the cosmic to the human level was no discovery of Teilhard's, but reflects an idea which was central to scientific progressive thinking in the 19th century; Monod thus sees it as the kernel of Spencer's positivism as well as of the theory of dialectic materialism put forward by Marx and Engels.

Animism, as we have seen, is a phenomenon which has manifested itself on various levels and under various circumstances, from the Weltanschauung of the primitive tribes to the central conception of modern philosophers; and - above all - it forms part of every man's psychological make-up. In Western civilization, however, animistic tendencies have on the whole been banished into the sphere of imagination, whereas rational thinking has oriented itself on a scientifically-realistic attitude and, as Tylor has it, "Physics, Chemistry, Biology, have seized whole provinces of the ancient Animism, setting force for life and law for will". (13) If we look for ex-

(11) H.W. Piper, The Active Universe (London, 1962), p. 25.

(12) Jacques Monod, Le hasard ou la nécessité (Paris, 1970).

(13) Tylor, vol. II, p. 167.

amples of animistic traces in our culture, then, we must turn to that field which contains the concrete products of imaginative activity: that is the arts. And indeed, we find that animism is a recurrent theme in art, and not only in literature, but also in painting. Significant evidence of animistic vision are, for instance, the ancient mural paintings that were discovered in the course of excavations in Rome and other Italian towns towards the end of the 15th century. In these paintings, or decorations rather, elements from the human, animal, and vegetable world were mingled and combined at random. (14) This characteristic ornamental style came to be known under the name "grotesque" (a derivation from the Italian word "grotta" - with reference to the place where these decorations had been discovered; cf. also in this context chapter 3.3 of this thesis).

Although this style of the grotesque was rejected by naturalistic critics, it was eagerly studied and copied by the Italian painters of the Renaissance, among whom Raphael is probably the most prominent. It seems, though, that the term "grottesco" even at the time of the Renaissance contained not only the element of the playful, carefree and imaginative, but also the connotation of the uncanny and frightening, an aspect of animism, which is also expressed in Freud's essay on "The Uncanny". (cf. p. 23)

Nevertheless, the grotesque interaction between human, animal and object world remained a favourite topic in visual art; it is a theme which has always fascinated artists and which has influenced the characteristic style

- (14) In his De architectura, Vitruvius had described this particular style in detail, and not with much enthusiasm, as it would appear: "... all those motifs, based on reality, are now being rejected by an unreasonable fashion. Indeed, there is a preference nowadays for decorating walls with monsters rather than with clear images of the real world. Instead of columns they draw grooved stems with curly leaves and volutes, and instead of gables they paint ornaments, as well as candelabra bearing painted aediculae. On the gables of these aediculae there are delicate flowers, folding and unfolding, which protrude from roots and which are in addition set with entirely absurd little figures. And finally these little stems even bear half-figures, some with human, others with animal heads." Quoted from Wolfgang Kayser, Das Groteske. Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung (Oldenburg & Hamburg, 1957), pp. 20/21 (my translation).

and expression of Hieronymus Bosch, Heinrich Fuseli, Salvador Dali and Max Ernst, to mention only a few.

Animism, however, is not only a central theme in painting, but also in literature. Here again we find the deep-rootedness of the animistic view if we look at the most original and rudimentary form of literature - folk and fairy tales. Particularly the fairy tale has very strong animistic tendencies. The boundary between the animate and the object world - though usually present at the outset of a tale - is of a very transparent quality and always in danger of being totally abolished, as it very often is. Thus it is not unnatural to find the sun and moon personified, or objects converted into animals or invested with the ability to speak like human beings. Likewise, animals frequently behave in a human manner, while human beings under an evil spell may be turned into animals, only to regain their human shape after the spell has been broken. Interaction between the animate and the inanimate levels is also at the basis of the popular motif of a figure's apparent death and eventual re-awakening to life (as we find in the tales of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, for instance).

Thus animism (and also its opposite, mechanism) functions as a common feature on the fairy tale level and provides that genre with a whole repertory of stock motifs. As Bruno Bettelheim points out, (15) it is mainly due to this animistic perspective that a child is able to accept and understand the fairy tale. It offers him a world which is closer to his own conception of the world than to that of the "enlightened" adults. It is partly owing to its animistic potential that the fairy tale in the child's eyes acquires an almost mythical significance; for the magic by which such animistic transformations are enacted is never arbitrarily distributed, but always emanates from an ultimate source of good or evil. Maybe in our civilization the fairy tale represents the last stronghold in which our animistic tradition is preserved and exhibited on a general (that is not merely artistic) level. It is interesting to find that the animistic perspective is introduced even in the so-called "artificial" fairy tale, that is in the story, which - in contrast to the

(15) Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment (New York, 1975).

traditional fairy tale - can be assigned to one particular author; such is the case in Hans Christian Andersen's tales, for instance, as well as in those written by E.T.A. Hoffmann.

But it is not only in folk-literature that the theme of an animated object world appears. We find that animism has also entered the world of classical literature. Thus, Edgar Allan Poe's mastery in the creation of atmosphere is strongly based on animistic devices. Indeed, the interactions between the organic and the inorganic, between spirit and matter, and between life and death is a theme which constantly reappears in Poe's short-stories and largely contributes to his particular style. His belief that man is connected with his environment by an inseparable bond of analogy - or even identity - is explicitly demonstrated in his short-story "The Fall of the House of Usher". There we become aware of this bond by means of the analogy between the description of the mansion of Usher and its owner. The analogy later on becomes more explicit when Roderick Usher expresses his belief in the sentience of the object-world:

This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things... The belief, however, was connected...with the gray stones of the home of his [Usher's] forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been there, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones - in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many fungi which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around - above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence - the evidence of the sentience - was to be seen, he said...in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made him what I now saw him - what he was. (16)

This passage illustrates the strong interaction between man and his environment, that is between the animate and the inanimate world in the story. The set-up of the mansion is as much influenced by the people living within its walls, as the condition of these people is made dependent on the

- (16) Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher", in: Collected Works of E.A. Poe, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge, Mass., London, 1978), vol. II, p. 408.

house. This relationship of interaction and interdependence is made visible by way of the atmosphere which pervades the house and which is essentially a product of this interaction.

The submergence of man into nature was also one of the major postulations - if not the main issue - of the Romantic movement in England. For the Romantics, a man's ability to experience the world animistically, that is his ability to communicate with nature, became a measure of his imaginative potential. Wordsworth's Prelude is full of references to this communion between the poet and nature:

... the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; ... (17)

Likewise in his Windy Bow alterations to "An Evening Walk", Wordsworth states the importance of a man's willingness to accept and contemplate the world around him in animistic terms:

A heart that vibrates evermore, awake
To feeling for all forms that life can take,
That wider still its sympathy extends
And sees not any line where being ends;
Sees sense, through Nature's rudest forms betrayed,
Tremble obscure in fountain, rock and shade,
And while a secret power those forms endears
Their social accents never vainly hears. (18)

For Wordsworth, this communion of man with nature was an act of religious significance; for only by way of a humble and reverent contemplation of nature could man reach a state in which communication and communion with God was possible.

- (17) William Wordsworth, The Prelude, ed. J.C. Maxwell (Harmondsworth, 1971), book I, pp. 68/69; (1st version: ll. 614 - 616; 2nd version: ll. 586 - 588).
- (18) William Wordsworth, Poetical Works, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1940), vol. I, p. 10.

A similar reverence for nature and objects of nature was postulated by S.T. Coleridge. Influenced by the theories of Erasmus, Darwin and Priestley, he understood the universe to be a ubiquitous manifestation of energy:

Nature's vast ever-acting Energy!
In will, in deed, Impulse of All to All. (19)

For Coleridge, as for Wordsworth, the animistic capacity represents the imaginative potential of an artist. Only those people who are able to appreciate the sparkle of life in seemingly inanimate objects, can, according to Coleridge, be truly credited with the possession of imagination. In a letter to William Sotheby, in which he discusses the differences between Greek and Hebrew poetry, he selects animism as the distinguishing criterion:

It must occur to every Reader that the Greeks in their religious poems address always the Numina Loci, the Genii, the Dryads, the Naiads, etc. etc. - All natural objects were dead - mere hollow Statues - but there was a Godkin or Goddessling included in each - In the Hebrew Poetry you find nothing of this poor Stuff - as poor in genuine Imagination, as it is mean in Intellect - / At best, it is but Fancy, or the aggregating Faculty of the mind - not Imagination, or the modifying, and co-adunating Faculty. This the Hebrew Poets appear to me to have possessed beyond all others - & next to them the English. In the Hebrew Poets each thing has a life of its own, & yet they are all one life. In God they move & live, & have their Being - not had, as the cold System of Newtonian Theology represents / but have. (20)

Coleridge combined his animistic view with the philosophy of pantheism: the life or energy which was to be detected everywhere in Nature was ultimately part of one vast substratum of life and energy - God.

Wordsworth's and Coleridge's belief in an animated universe was shared and adopted by other Romantics. Looking at their animistic representation of

- (19) Samuel T. Coleridge, "The Destiny of Nations", ll. 461/462, in: The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest H. Coleridge (Oxford, 1912), vol. I, p. 147.
- (20) Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford, 1956), vol. II, "Letter to W. Sotheby, September 10, 1802", pp. 865/866.

the world, John Ruskin conceived the notion of the "pathetic fallacy". In quoting the following lines from Kingsley's Alton Locke

They rowed her in across the rolling foam -
The cruel, crawling foam, ...

he contends:

The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the "pathetic fallacy". (21)

Although he also mentions the possibility of a "fallacy of wilful fancy", for Ruskin a poet's fallacious representation of the world is only then poetically convincing, when it is "pathetic", that is "the sign of a morbid state of mind". (22)

If we bear in mind the deep-rootedness of animistic conceptions in human nature, it is difficult to accept this statement of Ruskin's. Even in an age of enlightenment, a poet's resorting to animistic imagery need not necessarily be the result of a morbid state of mind. Particularly the Romantics' animistic attitude seems to me to be much more positive and life-asserting than might be assumed from Ruskin's statement; indeed, it is not really "pathetic", but full of poetic truth and conviction.

What, in addition, strikes me as particularly fascinating is the similarity between the Romantics' almost religious reverence for nature and the universe, and the primitives' homage to trees, rivers, the moon and the sun, based on an animistic belief in their god-like essence. Their empathetic submergence into nature represents an attempt to breach the gap which enlightenment and science had created between man and his environment, and to restore the harmony and interdependence between all levels of existence.

(21) John Ruskin, "Of the Pathetic Fallacy", in: Modern Painting (London, 1904), vol. III, p. 205.

(22) Ruskin, "Of the Pathetic Fallacy", p. 218.

1.2 Animistic Influences on Dickens

Before starting on a detailed discussion of Dickens's use of animism in his novels, I should like to take a brief look at those forms of animistic appearances and manifestations with which he was familiar and which thus may have contributed to his development of that particular device.

The primary stimulus to the imagination of Dickens (as indeed of any child) may probably be found in the world of his toys. There is a detailed retrospective account which Dickens wrote at the age of thirty-eight about his toys as he remembered them from childhood:

I look into my youngest Christmas recollections! All toys at first, I find. Up yonder, among the green holly and red berries, is the Tumbler with his hands in his pockets who wouldn't lie down, but whenever he was put on the floor, persisted in rolling his fat body about, until he rolled himself still, and brought those lobster eyes of his to bear upon me - when I affected to laugh very much, but in my heart of hearts was extremely doubtful of him. Close beside him is that infernal snuff-box, out of which there sprang a demoniacal Counsellor in a black gown, with an obnoxious head of hair, and a red cloth mouth, wide open, who was not to be endured on any terms, but could not be put away either; for he used suddenly, in a highly magnified state, to fly out of Mammoth Snuff-Boxes in dreams, when least expected. Nor is the frog with cobbler's wax on his tail, far off; for there was no knowing where he wouldn't jump; and when he flew over the candle, and came upon one's hand with that spotted back - red on a green ground - he was horrible. The cardboard lady ... was milder and was beautiful; but I can't say as much for the larger cardboard man, who used to be hung against the wall and pulled by a string; there was a sinister expression in that nose of his; and when he got his legs round his neck (which he very often did), he was ghastly, and not a creature to be alone with. (17)

We may safely assume, I think, that Dickens's collection of toys was fairly representative for any child of his social class, and not in any way unusual; indeed, many of them are still found today. Nevertheless, it seems remarkable that more than thirty years later Dickens should be able to recall not only all his toys in minute detail, but also the mixed feelings of

(17) Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Tree", in: Christmas Stories (London, Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 4.

amusement, fascination and terror which those toys used to arouse in him. In this retrospective presentation, the Tumbler, the leaping frog, the cardboard man and the other toys seem to be more than mere objects - they are constantly hovering on the threshold between the animate and the inanimate world, threatening to come to life any minute. Curiously enough, it is the adults who largely contribute to the child's animistic impression of the world by presenting him with toys that are imitations of "real" life, not only in their physical appearance, but also in their motoric capacity. Thus it is not surprising that a sensitive and imaginative child, as Dickens presumably was, should be deeply impressed by these animated objects; it also seems logical to assume that young Dickens's experience with those toys became one of the main sources for his constant use of animism in his narrations. Angus Wilson writes in his biography of Dickens:

The toy-world, animistic, infant environment of moving objects, and of faces in inanimate things, was to remain ... the most pervasive element of his novels, in which houses, furniture and all everyday objects have a mysterious life and people participate in the "thingness" of their surroundings. (18)

As Wilson suggests, Dickens's habit of mechanizing characters may also be traced back to his experience with toys. In a world where human and animal effigies are endowed with a semblance of life, real living beings may - by a reciprocal process - turn into robots and pieces of furniture.

Another circumstance which proved to be of paramount importance for the development of Dickens's imagination was his early acquaintance with fairy tales. They were told to him by his - by now legendary - nurse, Mary Weller, and exerted from the beginning an irresistible fascination on young Dickens, who later on remarked about that time:

Little Red Riding Hood was my first love. I felt that if I could have married little Red Riding Hood, I should have known perfect bliss. (19)

(18) Angus Wilson, The World of Charles Dickens (Harmondsworth, 1970, 1972), p. 22.

(19) Dickens, "A Christmas Tree", p. 7.

This statement, albeit jocular, is indicative of the realistic impression which fairy tales make on the imagination of children. These tales, as we found out in the last chapter, reflect a world which, in its mythical set-up and its equating of human beings, animals, and objects, is very close to a child's conception of the world. Dickens regarded the contact with fairy tales as an indispensable factor in the development of a child's imagination, a point which he repeatedly emphasized, both explicitly in articles (such as "Fraud on the Fairies", published in Household Words) and implicitly in his novels. (Significantly enough, all the children in his novels who are deprived of any contact with fairy tales, such as Bitzer, the Gradgrinds, and the young Smallweeds, are also imaginatively and morally under-developed; for a more detailed discussion of this point see chapter IV of this study.)

The child, according to Bettelheim (cf. p. 26), is enabled to project his own situation onto the fairy tale and identify with the protagonist. This is an essential outlet in his own process of development and adaptation (that is his coming to terms with his environment). This was certainly true in the case of Dickens, for whom fairy tales not only represented food for his lively imagination and the first contact with literature, but, which may be most important of all, a means by which he was able to "survive" (in the psychological, if not the physical sense) the rapidly worsening living conditions in which the Dickens family found itself. Harry Stone writes about that time:

If early reading was his only and his constant comfort, fairy tales were the quintessence of that comfort; if early reading helped him transcend the afflictions and disappointments of life, fairy tales were the essence of such transcendence; if early reading was a matrix of his art, fairy tales were the very form and shape of that matrix. In fairy tales all objects were transformed and transformable. That transforming power, which soon became a part of his own habit and vision, and later a hallmark of his own creation, he first found in fairy stories. (20)

Important for the purpose of our present study is the point which Stone alludes to in the above statement, namely that fairy tales were subservient in widening and deepening Dickens's animistic perception of the world. In

20) Harry Stone, Dickens and the Invisible World (Bloomington & London, 1979), p. 56.

this sense they represented a logical continuity from the world of toys. As we saw above (cf. p. 26), in a fairy tale any object may be transformed into a human being, and any human being into an animal or an object. Animation and mechanization belong to the stock motifs of the fairy tale; they are, in fact, major vehicles of the magic of fairy tales. In a similar way, Dickens's use of these devices in his writing contributes to the magic of his narrations; a magic which does not annihilate reality, but rather distorts it and thereby emphasizes it (in the way in which a caricature at the same time distorts and emphasizes human features). Stone truly appreciates this aspect when he writes:

Dickens's art may be seen as a most consummate melding of reality and fairy tales, a melding that intensifies and distorts reality in order to be more profoundly true to it. For through the magic and technique of fairy tales, Dickens found that he could convey life in its exactitude, while at the same time dramatizing and commenting on that deceptive exactitude and depicting its intricate mystery. (21)

A further stimulus for Dickens's imagination, particularly in view of his animistic "prepossession", was the burlesque theatre, and in particular the pantomime. Both with respect to story and to style or dramatic technique, the pantomime bore a very close resemblance to the fairy tale. The plot was frequently a stage adaptation of one of the traditional fairy tales; the enactment of it was embedded in scenes of magical transformations. William Axton describes them as follows:

Scenic transformations were both ingenious and sumptuous. Properties and sets collapsed or opened out into radically different things or places which yet bore striking resemblances to their originals: palaces and temples reappeared as huts and cottages, trees turned into houses, colonades became beds of tulips, and mechanic shops were translated into serpents and ostriches. Properties commonly played upon grotesque incongruities in scale or context, and comic animism was a favourite device. Thus clowns went disguised as kitchen implements, animals, outsized vegetables, even plants and trees; and it was customary to see "Harlequin trimming himself with an axe, hewing down a tree with a razor, making his tea in a cauldron, and brewing ale in a teapot." (22)

(21) Stone, p. 69.

(22) William F. Axton, Circle of Fire: Dickens' Vision and Style and the Popular Victorian Theater (Lexington, 1966), pp. 19/20.

If we bear in mind the deep fondness which Dickens always held for both fairy tales and the theatre, it is easy to imagine how fascinated he must have been by a symbiosis of the two, such as the pantomime offered. For indeed, the pantomime transformed the stage into a world ungoverned by any conventional or realistic order; it presented a world where the animate and the inanimate co-existed without any fixed border between them. Dickens, in his Christmas recollections in "A Christmas Tree", refers to the pantomime as a "stupendous Phenomenon" where:

Everything is capable, with the greatest ease, of being changed into Anything; and "Nothing is, but thinking makes it so". (23)

In summarizing, we can say, then, that toys, fairy tales and the pantomime made considerable contributions to Dickens's animistic development. Probably there were other contributing factors as well. What I have attempted to show here is that Dickens did not "invent" the use of animistic and mechanistic devices in his narrations. His achievement lies rather in the fact that he was able to retain - as an adult and as a writer - a perspective of the world which is basically that of a child - imaginative and without rational prepossession.

(23) Dickens, "A Christmas Tree", p. 10.

II THE TECHNICAL ASPECT OF ANIMATION AND MECHANIZATION

2.1 Animation

2.1.1 Animation of Objects

When we speak of "animism" generally, be it in connection with religion, philosophy, or literature, we usually mean either the transformation of concrete objects or things into human or animal beings, or the conferment of human or animal features upon these objects. As we shall see below (cf. chapter 2.1.3), animism can also take place on the abstract level. For the present, though, we shall concentrate on the first, and maybe more typical kind, that is to say the animation of concrete objects.

Although there is hardly anything insignificant or plain enough to be exempted from Dickens's animistic touch, there are some objects for which the author does betray a definite preference, hence they are subject to animation over and over again in the author's work. Among these, houses probably rank foremost. A good example is the Maypole Inn in Barnaby Rudge:

With its overhanging stories, drowsy little panes of glass, and front bulging out and projecting over the pathway, the old house looked as if it were nodding in its sleep. Indeed, it needed no very great stretch of fancy to detect in it other resemblances to humanity. The bricks of which it was built had originally been a deep dark red, but had grown yellow and discoloured like an old man's skin; the sturdy timbers had decayed like teeth; and here and there the ivy, like a warm garment to comfort it in its age, wrapt its green leaves closely round the time-worn walls. (BR, p. 44)

Here we have a very painstaking and detailed analogy between a building and a human being, an old man, to be more specific. The analogy is based on the one hand on the physical correspondences which an imaginative spectator might detect between a house and a human being (windows -

eyes, ivy-cover - garment); on the other hand it is based upon the fact that houses, like human beings, are subjected to the process of aging (yellow and discoloured bricks - old man's skin, decayed timbers - old man's teeth). And it is in fact the old and even half-decayed houses which attract Dickens's imagination more than new buildings, possibly because they have, through this very process of aging, acquired a certain atmosphere or, as Dickens puts it, a certain personality. Hillis Miller writes in this context:

The image of the dark, dilapidated house which strives constantly to fall of its own weight is one of the recurrent confirmations of the imagination of Dickens. (1)

The comparison of houses to human beings in Dickens's novels, however, does not only operate on the physical, but also on a psychological level. In Little Dorrit, the Meagles' home is described as

a charming place (none the worse for being a little eccentric), on the road by the river, and just what the residence of the Meagles family ought to be. ... It was made of an old brick house, of which a part had been altogether pulled down, and another part had been changed into the present cottage; so there was a hale elderly portion, to represent Mr. and Mrs. Meagles, and a young picturesque, very pretty portion to represent Pet. There was even the later addition of a conservatory sheltering itself against it, uncertain of hue in its deep-stained glass, and its transparent portions flashing to the sun's rays, now like fire and now like harmless water drops; which might have stood for Tattycoram. (LD, p. 235)

What we find in this passage, is not merely a general comparison between a building and a human being, but a particular analogy between a house and the people who live in it. Thus the Meagles' house reflects the chronological growth of that family and the characteristics of its individual members.

Houses are also frequently given credit for thinking and feeling like human beings; thus the bulging disposition of Mr. Wickfield's house in *Canterbury* is, in David Copperfield's eyes, attributed to its curiosity:

... the whole house was leaning forward, trying to see who was passing on the narrow pavement below. (DC, p. 275)

- (1) J. Hillis Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 40.

What has been said about the exterior of houses, holds equally true for the interior, or to be more particular, for the furniture in Dickens's novels. Thus David Copperfield compares his washing-stand to Mrs. Gummidge, on account of its "being rickety on its three legs, and having a discontented something about it". (DC, p. 94) Tom Smart, the protagonist of the interpolated "Bagman's Story" in the Pickwick Papers, witnesses the gradual transformation of a chair into an old man (cf. p. 68), and the following passage describes the home of Arthur Gride, miser and wooer of Madeline Bray in Nicholas Nickleby:

Meagre old chairs and tables of spare and bony make, and hard and cold as misers' hearts, were ranged in grim array against the gloomy walls; attenuated presses, grown lank and lantern-jawed in guarding the treasures they enclosed, and tottering, as though from constant fear and dread of thieves, shrunk up on dark corners, whence they cast no shadows on the ground, and seemed to hide and cower from observation ...

No fireside couch was there, to invite repose and comfort. Elbow-chairs there were, but they looked uneasy in their minds, cocked their arms suspiciously and timidly, and kept upon their guard. Others were fantastically grim and gaunt, as having drawn themselves up to their utmost height, and put on their fiercest looks to stare all comers out of countenance. Others again knocked up against their neighbours, or leant for support against the wall, somewhat ostentatiously, as if to call all men to witness that they were not worth the taking. The dark square lumbering bedsteads seemed built for restless dreams; the musty hangings seemed to creep in scanty folds together, whispering among themselves, when rustled by the wind, their trembling knowledge of the tempting wares that lurked within the dark and tight-locked closets. (NN, p. 763)

Again the transformation of furniture into human beings suggests a physical analogy (that is, the anatomical division of both chairs and human beings into body, legs, and arms) and may establish in addition a psychological bond between the pieces of furniture and their owner ("hard and cold as misers' hearts", "tottering, as though from ... fear and dread of thieves"). As John Carey accurately points out:

Nothing is more usual in Dickens's imaginative arena than for a miser's furniture to behave like a miser, and a cripple's like a cripple. (2)

- (2) John Carey, The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination (London, 1973), p. 102.

What is remarkable then, is the fact that these pieces of furniture not only look like people but act like them as well: presses totter, shrink up into corners and seem to play hide and seek. Chairs put on "fierce looks", and "knock up against their neighbours", and the musty hangings are caught "whispering among themselves". For the animistic mind it is, of course, only a logical step from describing things as human beings to letting them act in a human way as well. And yet we never sense a breach of the fundamental physical laws, for Dickens's method is very subtle. For one thing, through the use of the simile, Dickens's analogies are often tentative rather than assertive (cf. also p. 66). Furthermore the apparent animation of these objects never excludes the possibility of a perfectly natural explanation. Thus, pieces of furniture which are unevenly built, do actually display a tendency to totter and lean against the wall, and curtains in motion do produce a rustling noise reminiscent of whispering. The visual or acoustic stimulus, then, is already there, and Dickens's animation is merely an interpretation of it.

Not surprisingly, Dickens's animistic imagination does not stop at houses and furniture, but extends to almost any commodity of human usage. Miss Murdstone's bag shuts up "like a bite" (DC, p. 611); Arthur Gride is in possession of "quaint bottles, some with necks like so many storks, and others with square Dutch-built bodies and short apoplectic throats" (NN, p. 77); and the glasses which Bob Sawyer borrows for his Bachelor Party are "great, dropsical, bloated articles, each supported on a huge gouty leg" (PP, p. 529). For Charley Neckitt, Esther Summerson's little maid, writing is a trying business, as in her hand "every pen appeared to become perversely animated, and to go wrong and crooked, and to stop and splash, and sidle into corners like a saddle-donkey" (BH, p. 482). As this list of examples shows, Dickens compares objects not only to people, but also to animals. Animal imagery is mostly used to bestow upon the object in question a quality or attitude which is characteristic of that particular animal (for instance long bottle neck - stork; stubbornness of pen - donkey). The latter example also illustrates another interesting point: Objects, as they are used by a person, have a tendency to develop a sense of independence and even malevolence, which makes them behave in a manner completely contrary to the wishes of that person. In this sense, W.J.

Harvey remarks about the Dickens world that "it has a comic or malign energy of its own". (3)

If houses and furniture suggest physical resemblance to human beings, how much more does this apply to pieces of clothing, which, after all, are exact replicas of the human shape. In the Sketches, a second-hand clothes-shop in Monmouth Street inspires Dickens to speculations about imaginary wearers of the exhibited clothes, until

... whole rows of coats have started from their pegs, and buttoned up, of their own accord, round the waists of imaginary wearers; lines of trousers have jumped down to meet them; waistcoats have almost burst with anxiety to put themselves on; and half an acre of shoes have suddenly found feet to fit them, and gone stumping down the street... (SB, p. 75)

The theme reappears in the novels: Barnaby Rudge is scared out of his wits by seeing pieces of clothes talking together, and coquettish Bella Wilfer girds herself with a white apron which comes "close and tight under her chin, as if it had caught her round the neck to kiss her." (OMF, pp. 511/512) A sense of malicious independence is given to Joe Gargery's hat, which, during Joe's visit to Pip's London apartment, keeps tumbling down from the peg, and in "The Battle of Life" the maid Clemency wears a "pair of self-willed shoes, that never wanted to go where she went." ("BL", p. 145)

Animation, furthermore, becomes compulsive for Dickens, when he is writing about objects that have been created after human or animal likeness. This applies, for instance, to statues: Esther Summerson, on one of her walks, passes by Chesney Wold, "where old stone lions and grotesque monsters bristled outside the dens of shadow, and snarled at the evening gloom over the escutcheons they had in their grip." (BH, p. 570) It applies even more to pictures and signboards. Thus, again in Chesney Wold, the portraits of the deceased Dedlocks come to life at the hour of sunset:

- (3) W.J. Harvey, "Character and the Context of Things", in: The Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Robert Murray Davis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969), p. 128.

Then do the frozen Dedlocks thaw. Strange movements come upon their features, as the shadows of leaves play there. A dense Justice in a corner is beguiled into a wink. A staring Baronet, with a truncheon, gets a dimple in his chin. Down into the bosom of a stony shepherdess there steals a fleck of light and warmth, that would have done it good, a hundred years ago. One ancestress of Volumnia, in high-heeled shoes, very like her - casting the shadow of that virgin event before her full two centuries - shoots out into a halo and becomes a saint. A maid of honour of the court of Charles the Second, with large round eyes (and other charms to correspond), seems to bathe in glowing water, and it ripples as it glows. (BH, pp. 620/621)

It is, of course, no mere animistic whim which instigates Dickens to do this; the Dedlock portraits, come to life, stand in sharp contrast to the living Dedlocks, who give us the impression of being lifeless objects or walking pictures; they will have to wait for their countenances to be preserved on canvas before they in turn can participate in life. In the same novel there appears the "pertinacious Roman, pointing from the ceiling" (BH, p. 646), an allegorical painting in Mr. Tulkinghorn's room, which eventually will be the only witness to his murder.

Signboards, in contrast to portraits, are posted for the purpose of addressing passers-by and attracting potential customers, and it is this function which Dickens alludes to when he animates them. Thus, in "The Battle of Life", the signboard of the Nutmeg-Grater Inn "perched up in the tree with its golden letters winking in the sun, ogled the passer-by from among the green leaves, like a jolly face, and promised good cheer." ("BL", p. 203)

Another object which traditionally reflects human features is the door-knocker, and it goes without saying that this constitutes another stimulus for Dickens's animistic mind. Even in the Sketches ("Our Next-Door Neighbour") Dickens betrays his fascination for this object and discusses at length the necessary correspondence between a door-knocker and the person living in the house. He even goes so far as to suggest, albeit jokingly, that any alteration in a man's disposition would "induce [him] to remove and seek some knocker more congenial to his altered feelings." (SB, p. 41)

Most memorable in this context is the transformation of Scrooge's door-knocker into the face of his deceased partner, Marley:

And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change: not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot-air; and though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be, in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again. ("CC", pp. 54/55)

This transformation is of vital importance, as it sets the "supernatural" tone for the whole story; and the fact that Marley's face changes back to the knocker in the end gives the whole incident psychological reality, since it leaves it open whether the transformation actually has taken place, or whether it is a mere figment of Scrooge's hallucinatory imagination. And it is very fitting that of all people it is Marley whose features the knocker assumes, since he is in a way Scrooge's second self, although he has come to learn the consequences of an ill-spent life; his ghost will appear again later in the evening to warn Scrooge of those consequences. A psychologist might therefore regard Marley's ghost as Scrooge's subconscious self, while a moralist might see him as the personification of Scrooge's conscience. (cf. also in this context p. 126)

Helmut Viebrock, who has devoted a whole article to the physiognomy of the knocker in Dickens's works, writes:

There are traceable lines of development in Dickens' descriptions of objects assuming human traits, from a physiognomic interest ... through a drunken man's hallucination ... to a vision stirred up by a deeply hidden conscience. (4)

- (4) Helmut Viebrock, "The Knocker: Physiognomical Aspects of a Motif in Hoffmann and Dickens", in: *English Studies*, vol. 43 (1962), p. 401. An interesting circumstance, which serves as the basis of Viebrock's article, is the fact that E.T.A. Hoffmann, in his fairy tale "Der goldene Topf", resorted to the same device of animating a door-knocker.

Another thing which proves to be of major interest to Dickens, is the category of objects which move, or seem to move, of their own accord. Among these we find time-indicators, such as clocks and watches. Paul Dombey regards the clock at Blimber's Hall as a kind of double of Doctor Blimber, as it repeats in staccato the latter's favourite phrase "how, is, my, little friend?" over and over again. The mechanical ticking of the clock is equated to Doctor Blimber's speech which is marked by an excessive use of stock phrases. Arthur Brown claims that in Dickens's novels "clocks seem ... associated ... with the father figure" (5), a statement which seems to hold true, at least for the example quoted above, where sternness and inflexibility are characteristics of both Doctor Blimber and his clock. Uriah Heep possesses a "pale, inexpressive-faced watch" (DC, p. 292); through this metaphor Dickens again conveys a strong visual resemblance between an object and his owner. Another time-indicator, the sundial, is animated in David Copperfield's imagination as he looks at it, thinking: "Is the sun-dial glad, I wonder, that it can tell the time again?" (DC, p. 29) Thus, in David's eyes, the sun-dial is not only technically, but also emotionally, dependent on the sun; it is credited with the self-same feelings which he himself has with respect to the sun.

Whereas Dickens's animations of clocks and watches are of a playful and innocent nature, his language becomes sombre when he is writing about oversized mobile objects, such as engines and trains. The size of these objects and their technical complexity, which makes them rise above human beings in the literal as well as in the figurative sense, may be one reason for his aversion to them; but it seems as though Dickens generally asked himself whether these objects were not more functional in exploiting and threatening human beings (particularly poor people) than in being useful to them. Thus, in Hard Times, the industrial engines are repeatedly compared

- (5) Arthur Washburn Brown, Sexual Analysis of Dickens's Props (New York, 1971), p. 35.

to elephants. Trains are almost always represented as monsters. (6) This theme appears most explicitly in Dombey and Son:

Night and day the conquering engines rumbled at their distant work, or, advancing smoothly to their journey's end, and gliding like tame dragons into the allotted corners grooved out to the inch for their reception, stood bubbling and trembling there, making the walls quake, as if they were dilating with the secret knowledge of great powers yet unsuspected in them, and strong purposes not yet achieved. (DS, p. 290)

This description of the dragon-trains, with the intimation of their "great powers yet unsuspected" and their "strong purposes not yet achieved", is, of course, a prophetic allusion to that dramatic scene later in the novel, where Carker meets a well-deserved, but nevertheless gruesome, death under the wheels of a train, perceiving at the moment of his death the same analogy between the train and a monster which was sketched out by the narrator in the passage quoted above:

... he ... saw the red eyes, bleared and dim, in the daylight, close upon him - was beaten down, caught up, and whirled away upon a jagged mill, that spun him round and round, and struck him limb from limb, and licked his stream of life up with its fiery heat, and cast his mutilated fragments in the air. (DS, p. 875)

In the light of this it is intriguing to think what Dickens, had he lived in our century, would have done with the aero-plane, the computer, and the atomic plant.

As all of these examples show, there is hardly anything that escapes Dickens's animistic treatment, and it will therefore not surprise us to find that even those objects which, through their very function, are connected with the notion of death undergo this transformation. Indeed, it may have been precisely this connotation of death which presented a challenge to Dickens. Thus, young Jerry Cruncher, after having witnessed his father's collabora-

- (6) Dickens's aversion to trains is at times attributed to the fact that he was involved in the disastrous railway accident at Staplehurst in 1862, during which some of the passengers were killed. However, as Dombey and Son was written more than ten years earlier, this aversion must have existed before.

tion in corpse-stealing, believes the coffin to be running after him, following him up the stairs, and scrambling into bed with him. (TTC, p. 192) A similar trick is played upon *Oliver Twist* at Mr. Sowerberry's shop:

Against the wall were ranged, in regular array, a long row of elm boards cut into the same shape: looking in the dim light, like high-shouldered ghosts, with their hands in their breeches-pockets. (OT, p. 75)

Pip in Great Expectations derives from the shape and inscription of tombstones certain notions about his parents and the five little brothers that he never knew:

As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "Also Georgiana, Wife of the Above", I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine - who gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle - I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trouser-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence. (GE, p. 35)

It is, of course, ironically significant that these tombstones and lozenges, symbols for the dead, are more communicative to the child Pip than most of the people of his acquaintance. It is as if Dickens in this way was seeking to restore a balance which otherwise would be missing.

In summing up we could say, then, that Dickens animates objects on the basis of their physical and psychological correspondences to human beings and animals. I have by no means mentioned all the objects that are given animal or human features in Dickens's novels, nor is there room enough to do so. I have merely tried to demonstrate in this chapter, through a number of examples, how those transformations take place in concrete terms, and which objects in particular have attracted the author's animistic eye. In the following I shall show how this technique of animism is extended to levels other than material.

2.1.2 Animation of the Elements

Within the immense field of Dickens's animistic transformations, his animation of the elements provides a particularly interesting topic for study. Whereas objects partake of the world of concrete reality, the elements, although measurable in terms of temperature or movement, are of a more elusive nature. (The earth is of course concrete and solid, but, as we shall see, is hardly ever animated by Dickens.) Their representation in human or animal shape, then, involves a process of concretization.

The element which is most often animated in Dickens's novels is the air. It is not surprising, however, to find that it is not the quiet air, not the calm, which excited Dickens's imagination but rather the wind with its dynamic force and its howling sound. Martin Chuzzlewit opens with one of those animated wind gusts:

It was small tyranny for a respectable wind to go wreaking its vengeance on such poor creatures as the fallen leaves, but this wind happening to come up with a great heap of them just after venting its humour on the insulted Dragon, did so disperse and scatter them that they fled away, pell-mell, some here, some there, rolling over each other, whirling round and round upon their thin edges, taking frantic flights into the air, and playing all manner of extraordinary gambols in the extremity of their distress. Nor was this enough for its malicious fury: for not content with driving them abroad, it changed small parties of them and hunted them into the wheel-wright's saw-pit, and below the planks and timbers in the yard, and, scattering the sawdust in the air, it looked for them underneath, and when it did meet with any, whew! How it drove them on and followed at their heels! (MC, p. 59)

Thus the animation of the wind again involves the display of malign energy, and in the above passage Dickens goes on to show that the wind does not only wreak vengeance on the fallen leaves, but also on that model of virtue and hypocrisy, Mr. Pecksniff, bringing him to a fall in front of his own house. This provides, of course, a dramatic entrance-scene for one of the novel's main characters; it also puts Pecksniff symbolically where he belongs, a fact which we can only appreciate after having read on in the novel. This malign energy, then, may assume demonic powers when assigned to the wind (and the other elements). The significance of this will

be dealt with below. In nothing does the wind so much resemble human beings as in its sound. When David Copperfield first takes his friend Steerforth to Mr. Peggotty's house, the wind is "sighing ... even more mournfully, than it had sighed and moaned upon the night when I first darkened Mr. Peggotty's door" (DC, p. 369), and again, apart from evoking atmosphere, this moaning of the wind has a symbolic significance: it is through the introduction of Steerforth that the peaceful household of the Peggottys will eventually be destroyed.

Fog and mist are further variations of the element of air. Two of the characteristics of fog are its density and its mobility, and these provide that basis upon which Dickens works his animation of it. A classic among the fog-scenes appears at the beginning of Bleak House:

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex Marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gun-wales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds. (BH, p. 49)

Again atmosphere is created, but again the scene is charged with symbolic meaning, as the fog stands for the Chancery and its impenetrable web.

The element of water will be found in the imagery of the river and the ocean. The river is of major importance in Our Mutual Friend, where it almost plays the part of a character. Gaffer Hexam calls it his "best friend" (OMF, p. 45), as it provides him with the dead bodies of the drowned, whom he can rob of their loose money, while the narrator suggests that "a neophyte might have fancied that the ripples passing over it were dreadfully like faint changes of expression on a sightless face". (OMF, p. 47) Betty Higden, on her last desperate flight, hears the river whisper "come to me, come to me!", offering her a way out of all human misery: "My

breast is softer than the pauper-nurse's; death in my arms is peacefuller than among the pauper-wards. Come to me!" (OMF, p. 567)

The ocean, with its constant movement and its wide range of sound patterns, provides another suitable basis for animation. Dickens made use of it most notably in Dombey and Son, where Paul Dombey wistfully endeavours to understand the language of the waves:

"The sea, Floy, what is it that it keeps saying?"

She told him that it was only the noise of the rolling waves. "Yes, yes," he said. "But I know that they are always saying something. Always the same thing. What place is over there?" He rose up, looking eagerly at the horizon.

She told him that there was another country opposite, but he said he didn't mean that: he meant farther away - farther away!

Very often afterwards, in the midst of their talk, he would break off, to try to understand what it was that the waves were always saying; and would rise up in his couch to look towards that invisible region, far away. (DS, p. 171)

The connection between the sea and death has been established in the very first chapter of the novel, in connection with Mrs. Dombey's death, which prepares us to accept the speaking of the waves not merely as the product of a child's overwrought imagination, but to interpret it rightly as a warning of impending death. And indeed, the theme is picked up again, when shortly afterwards Paul, as he dies, tells Florence "I hear the waves! They always said so!" (DS, p. 297)

Movement and sound are also the characteristics of fire. The licking flames, in combination with the crackling wood, resemble the wild dance of some dervish and inspire the human imagination more than anything else. After all, the hearth has traditionally been the place where stories and fairy-tales are invented and retold. Again, there is a perfect basis for animation, and Dickens does not let the opportunity go by. The man who takes Little Nell and her grandfather into his house for the night points to the fire and says:

"See yonder there - that's my friend."

"The fire?" said the child.

"It has been alive as long as I have," the man made answer. "We talk and think together all night long."

The child glanced quickly at him in her surprise, but he had turned his eyes in their former direction, and was musing as before.

"It's like a book to me," he said, "the only book I ever learned to read; and many an old story it tells me. It's music, for I should know its voice among a thousand, and there are other voices in its roar. It has its pictures too. You don't know how many strange faces and different scenes I trace in the red-hot coals. It's my memory, that fire, and shows me all my life." (OCS, p. 418)

The last element, earth, is the one which least frequently is animated in Dickens's novels. This is not surprising, for unlike the other elements, earth is by nature rigid, immobile and silent (and earthquakes are not so common in England as to become convincing integral parts of Dickens's novels). There are, however, a few cases where Dickens does try to animate this rigid element. In Bleak House the view through a window at Chesney Wold is described as:

... where, through the cold reflection of the blaze, the colder landscape shudders in the wind ...

This passage reflects the intense coldness that determines the atmosphere at Chesney Wold, an atmosphere which is apt to make the very nature shiver.

If we compare Dickens's animation of the elements to his animation of objects, we find that he tends to fill the former with much more symbolic meaning than the latter. This is not surprising, for it takes us straight back to the origin of animism generally. In primitive and ancient religions it was a common practice to confer divinity upon that which was beyond man's control. Thus the elements, by tradition, were charged with mythological significance, and metaphors like "the roaring of the sea" or "the howling of the wind" became familiar figures of speech long before Dickens. These images Dickens deepened through his human and animal metaphors, thus endowing the elements with an almost mythological significance.

2.1.3 Animation of Concepts

We have seen in the last chapter how something elusive, such as wind, water, and fire is made tangible through the process of animation. In the following I shall show how Dickens develops this technique even further, how he makes abstract terms, place and time, ideas and concepts, concrete by animating them.

Places in Dickens's novels sometimes bear proper Christian names, and in the course of the novel Dickens frequently refers to such a place succinctly as if it were a person. An excellent illustration of this is the parish of Saint Antoine, the slum district of Paris, which represents one of the main scenes of action in the Tale of Two Cities. Saint Antoine here stands summarily for all the suppressed people who live in that quarter.

In the evening, at which season of all others Saint Antoine turned himself inside out, and sat on a door-step, and window-ledges, and came to the corners of vile streets and courts, for a breath of air... (TTC, p. 215)

The rise of these people during the French Revolution is treated as if it were the rise of their patron saint:

Nor was this the end of the day's bad work, for Saint Antoine so shouted and danced his angry blood up, that it boiled again, on hearing when the day closed in that the son-in-law of the despatched, another of the people's enemies and insulters, was coming into Paris under a guard five hundred strong, in cavalry alone. Saint Antoine wrote his crimes on flaring sheets of paper, seized him - would have torn him out of the breast of an army to bear Foulon company - set his head and heart on pikes, and carried the three spoils of the day in wolf-procession through the streets. (TTC, p. 254)

What strikes us in this example, is the intensity of emotion, violence, and particularly the power that is concentrated in this personification which forms a drastic contrast to the impotence of the single citizen. Saint Antoine is clearly more than the sum of its individual members. Taylor Stoehr claims that:

... Saint Antoine is the hero of the Paris plot, and this personification results in an extraordinary intensification of violence in that part

of the novel. The use of a personified class to enact the characteristic drama of the hero seems to enable Dickens to bring together elements that he ordinarily kept apart. (7)

What Stoehr means with this bringing together of otherwise irreconcilable elements, is "the freeing of his [Dickens's] imagination of what a hero ought to be. With Saint Antoine there was no need to protect his respectability or preserve his goodness-at-heart."

In Bleak House we find the London equivalent of Saint Antoine, Tom-all-Alone's. In a similar way the sufferings of many are epitomised in the personification of the place-name, and the spreading of the small-pox, which is the result of miserable living conditions, is treated as if it were an act of revenge of that imaginary person, Tom-all-Alone:

There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere. (BH, p. 683)

Time and its units of measure, day, night and the seasons, also appear frequently in human shape. In Dombey and Son "the watching and attentive eyes of Time" (DS, p. 149) follow Paul's development, and the death of Anthony Chuzzlewit, for which his son Jonas is largely responsible, is rendered, ironically, as if it were a mere act of Time:

Time, burrowing like a mole below the ground, had marked his track by throwing up another heap of earth. And that was all. (MC, p. 390)

In Barnaby Rudge the night wears "black and dismal looks", (BR, p. 314) and in Our Mutual Friend winter is described as follows:

The white face of the winter day came sluggishly on, veiled in a frosty mist... (OMF, p. 118)

Finally, the most prominent personification of Time in Dickens's works is found in the "Christmas Carol" in the shape of the three ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Yet to Come. This is also prob-

ably the only instance, where the personification of Time serves a dramatic purpose, for the other examples quoted above have rather a rhetorical function.

Dickens also frequently animates concepts which denote aspects of human misery. Hunger, for instance, is the force that unites the poor people in the Tale and ultimately leads to the revolution. In the beginning of the novel it assumes, through Dickens's hand, a personality of its own:

... Hunger. It was prevalent everywhere. Hunger was pushed out of the tall houses in the wretched clothing that hung upon poles and lines; Hunger was repeated in every fragment of the small modicum of firewood that the man sawed off; Hunger stared down from the smokeless chimneys, and started up from the filthy street that had no offal, among its refuse, of anything to eat... (TTC, p. 61)

Two other aspects of human need are personified in the "Christmas Carol". The Ghost of Christmas Present hides two children under his coat and Scrooge inquires after their parentage:

"They are Man's.", said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased." ("CC", p. 108)

Poverty and lack of education, both of which Dickens had experienced in his childhood, figure among the most recurring themes in his novels. In the passage above, he personifies them through children, in order to demonstrate that people are poor and ignorant not through any fault of their own, but because they are neglected by the society which has bred them. But Dickens also paints a very realistic picture of the disastrous consequences of this financial and especially educational deprivation of the lower classes, a theme which he illustrated very vividly in A Tale of Two Cities.

Thus Dickens imbued inanimate things with life and concretized ideas by presenting them in human shape, thereby infusing his novels with allegorical elements. But at the same time he detected inanimate features in living beings, in human beings particularly.

In an analogous, though reversed, process (to animation) he therefore compared people to objects in his novels, a process which, since it stresses the mechanical element in man, will be discussed in the following chapters under the heading of "mechanization".

2.2 Mechanization

2.2.1 Mechanization of Human Beings

Mechanization is a process which turns human beings, or parts of their bodies, into objects or lifeless matter. It is in that sense diametrically opposed to the process of animation, but in Dickens's work the two are complementary, since, for the sake of balance, things cannot be filled with life at random, unless this life is taken away from a living being.

Let us start by considering what kind of characters Dickens mechanizes. It is not surprising for anyone who is familiar with even a few of his novels to find that the children in his novels have a strong tendency to turn - or rather, be turned - into objects. This is humorously done in Nicholas Nickleby, when, after Mr. Lillywick's dramatic reconciliation with the Kenwigs, "... the children were cleared away again." (NN, p. 788) The metaphor is amusing here, because the Kenwigs themselves are amusing in their endeavour to ensure both the affection and the legacy of their rich uncle Lillywick, in consequence of which they frequently use their children as a kind of friendly missile. Nevertheless, we find even here an indication of that utilitarian spirit which in Dickens's novels is so frequently responsible for the dehumanization of people through other human beings. This becomes most explicit in Hard Times, where the children in the schoolroom are referred to as vessels which can be filled with facts at random. Children in Dickens's novels are often pushed around like objects; thus Oliver Twist is put out "to let" and David Copperfield at Salem is handed over to Mr. Mell like a piece of goods:

I was in the height of my fever when a man entered and whispered to the clerk, who presently slanted me off the scale, and pushed me over to him, as if I were weighed, bought, delivered, and paid for. (DC, p. 124)

Whenever a child is likened to an object, though, it always happens through some other character in the novel, the narrator's position being simply that of a reporter. But there are also adult characters who, by society in general or their employers in particular, have been treated like objects all their lives, and who have, in consequence, developed objectified features. One of those is Wemmick in Great Expectations, who is said to have a "square wooden face" and "such a post-office of a mouth that he had a mechanical appearance of smiling". (GE, p. 196) A fixed smile and an inscrutable expression are necessary equipment for Jaggers' clerk, and it is significant that on his way to his castle-home in Walworth, Wemmick gradually loses those mechanical features, only to re-assume them the following day on his way to his office.

When Dickens describes a negative character, he almost invariably does so by comparing him, partially or totally, to inanimate matter. Thus the Marquis St. Evrémonde is said to have "a face like a fine mask". (TTC, p. 140) The use of the adjective "fine" should not deceive us into thinking that the implication of this characteristic is not basically negative, marking the physiognomy of the Marquis with that coldness, hardness, and lack of feeling which characterize his nature and make him responsible for the suffering of his subjects; qualities, furthermore, which rank him with the most negative of Dickens's characters.

These qualities are also frequently expressed through mechanizing metaphors that use metal as their vehicle. Miss Murdstone is described as a "metallic lady ... from head to foot" (DC, p. 97), Bounderby in Hard Times has a "metallic laugh", and when Arthur Clennam takes leave of his mother, it is said that

... if his mother had been sheathed in brass, there would have been no new barrier between them ... (LD, p. 76)

Another frequent vehicle for expressing rigidity and immobility is the statue. Ralph Nickleby, for instance, is at one point depicted as being "as rigid and motionless ... as if he had been a brazen statue." (NN, p. 832) When Mrs. Clennam, at the end of Little Dorrit, temporarily regains her ability to walk, this is "unreal to look upon, as though a picture or statue had been animated" (LD, p. 858), and when she afterwards relapses into her state of paralysis, it is said that "she lived and died a statue." (LD, p. 863)

The turning of people into wood serves much the same purpose, possibly with the additional implication of the hollow sound that results from knocking on wood. Thus Joe Bagstock, in Dombey and Son, is introduced as "a wooden-featured, blue-faced Major" (DS, p. 143), and Mrs. Podsnap is compared to a rocking-horse. The most wooden man in Dickens's creation, though, is undoubtedly Silas Wegg; apart from his (genuine) wooden leg, he is also said to have a knotty, wooden figure, and he even has a "wood-en wink". (OMF, p. 726)

In all of these cases, then, the comparison of characters to objects or matter involves an implicit criticism of these characters on the part of the narrator. It will be noted that he uses qualifying adjectives, such as "mean", "cruel", "stupid", etc., only after he has introduced the person in question through a mechanizing metaphor.

Not always, however, do Dickens's mechanizing metaphors carry negative implications, and not only negative characters are turned into objects. For Dickens very often makes use of the process of mechanization in order to bring out a droll or extraordinary feature in a character. Mr. Vincent Crummles in Nicholas Nickleby is called "bricks and mortar" by his fellow actors "because his style of acting is rather in the heavy and ponderous way". (NN, p. 367) Doctor Strong, in David Copperfield's eyes, "looked almost as rusty ... as the tall iron rails and gates outside the house; and almost as stiff and heavy as the great stone urns that flanked them..." (DC, p. 282) Where metal and stone in some cases carry negative implications, they are completely harmless in this context, for the suggestion this time is not the coldness of iron and the hardness of stone, but rather re-

flects physical qualities, such as advanced age and a sturdy physique. Sometimes Dickens associates a character with an object, and retains this metaphor throughout the novel, recalling it in a leitmotif manner whenever that character appears on the scene. Thus Mr. Pancks in Little Dorrit is likened to a steam-ship or tug, a metaphor which originates in the following analogy:

... much as an unwieldy ship in the Thames river may sometimes be seen heavily driving with the tide; broadside on, stern first, in its own way and in the way of everything else, though making a great show of navigation, when all of a sudden, a little coaly steam-tug will bear down upon it, take it in tow, and hustle off with it. Similarly the cumbrous Patriarch had been taken in tow by the snorting Pancks, and was now following in the wake of that dingy little craft. (LD, p. 191)

At other times the comparison of people to objects is merely of momentary importance, adding to the vividness and perspicuity of one particular moment. In the following passage, Mark Tapley, having informed Tom Pinch of his marital intentions, tries to keep a straight face, though without being able to restrain his "jollity", ultimately:

Tom stopping in the street to look at him, Mr. Tapley for a moment presented to his view an utterly stolid and expressionless face: a perfect wall of countenance. But opening window after window in it with astonishing rapidity, and lighting them all up as for a general illumination, he repeated: "Supposin", for the sake of argument, as it was her, sir!" (MC, p. 813)

No negative implications could possibly be transferred from the stone-wall to Mark Tapley. But the image of a wall which is suddenly breached perfectly illustrates the relaxation of Mark's face in a much more immediate way than an objective report of the occurrence could have achieved.

It is not only through the use of narrative metaphors, though, that Dickens likens his characters to objects. He also does so in another, even simpler, way: he mechanizes them through their names. I think it is no exaggeration to affirm that more than three quarters of Dickens's characters bear names which are unusual and made-to-measure, as it were. Frequently these names refer to the object-world, thus expressing an implicit analogy between the character in question and the object referred to within his name. In the

character Bradley Headstone, for example, we find the heaviness, inflexibility, and dumbness of a stone, and Major Bagstock's name already anticipates the stiffness and wooden quality of that character.

Again, only a few selected examples of mechanizing metaphors could be taken into account in this chapter. Its purpose was to find out what kind of characters are mechanized in what kind of way, and for what narrative reason. A final question which arises out of this context is whether there are any characters that are not mechanized by Dickens. And indeed, if we study the novels carefully, we find that there are a number of them, as, for instance, Jenny Wren, Lizzie Hexam, Steerforth, Agnes Wickfield, Helena Landless, and a few others upon whom Dickens never makes the slightest attempt at mechanization. It seems to me that these are all characters for whom their author felt a particular affection and respect (including Steerforth, who, being rather an amoral than an immoral character, is never referred to in terms of a villain) to the extent that he exempted them from his mechanizing touch.

2.2.2 Hypostatization of Human Limbs, Gestures and Phrases

One of Dickens's most characteristic devices consists in representing a human being mainly by one of his limbs, gestures, or phrases. This kind of synecdoche is a variation on the theme of mechanization, since it reduces the human element and identifies the whole human being with a partial, and therefore mechanical, aspect of his personality. (cf. also chapter 2.4.2)

Let us first consider the hypostatization of human limbs. A good example of this is the leg of the "flying" waiter in Edwin Drood:

And here let it be noticed, parenthetically, that the leg of this young man, in its application to the door, evinced the finest sense of touch: always preceding himself and tray (with something of an angling air about it), by some seconds: and always lingering after he and the tray had disappeared, like Macbeth's leg when accompanying him off the stage with reluctance to the assassination of Duncan. (ED, p. 140)

This passage gives us the idea that this leg is somehow detached from the rest of the body in the sense that like the animated objects in chapter 2.1.1 it seems to have an independent life of its own, that it is not controlled by the character of whom it forms a part. And what is more, we seem to feel that this leg is the most remarkable feature of that character and more important than the rest of the whole person, so that our attention is focused on it instead of the whole character; in this the device is reminiscent of the technique of close-up in filming. There are numerous metonymic displacements of this kind in Dickens's novels: Jaggers' finger, Sim Tappertit's legs, and the Marquis St. Evrémonde's nose, to name only a few. Furthermore it is characteristic of these displacements that they are repeated as leitmotifs whenever the character for whom they stand appears on the scene. Carker, the villain in Dombey and Son, is thus faithfully accompanied by a reference to his flashing teeth, and the image is so persistent that we tend to agree with John Carey, who claims that "Dombey and Son comes near to being a novel with a set of dentures as its villain." (8)

As Hillis Miller accurately points out, this device of hypostatization of human limbs is re-inforced through a linguistic peculiarity of Dickens:

The lack of a division into subjective and objective worlds is suggested by the recurrence of an unusual grammatical form. Instead of saying "Mr. Mould's legs", Dickens says "the legs of Mr. Mould". (9)

Dorothy van Ghent calls this division "a division into a me-half and an it-half". (10) This terminology seems to be very appropriate, since it reflects the process of mechanization or objectification that accompanies these synecdochic displacements.

A variation on this theme is provided by those instances, where a character has an artificial limb. Needless to say, in these cases the author's attention

(8) Carey, p. 96.

(9) Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels, p. 100.

(10) van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's", p. 421.

is focused with childlike fascination on that "foreign" limb. Most often it is a wooden leg, but it may also be an iron hand, as in the case of Captain Cuttle. Jenny Wren's crutch-stick, which is an indispensable implement for her, also falls into this category. Men with wooden legs haunt nearly all of Dickens's novels, the most famous being Sarah Gamp's husband, whose wooden leg has outlasted the rest of him in her memory, and Silas Wegg, who, apart from his (genuine) wooden leg, is of such a (metaphorically) wooden disposition that, as the author suggests, it would not be surprising if he were soon to grow another wooden leg.

This use of an artificial limb represents, of course, a further step in the process of mechanization of human beings, since the human limb is first replaced by an inorganic one, whereupon, through displacement, this inorganic part comes to stand for the whole human being. Dorothy van Ghent writes accordingly:

"The progressive keys of the transformation [human → object] may be illustrated by those people who have wooden parts." (11)

The effect of this almost surgical separation of human parts from the whole person, though humorous and illustrative on the whole, ultimately confers upon these novels a sense of the grotesque, even of the uncanny. In confirmation of this I will quote Sigmund Freud, who writes in his article about the uncanny:

Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, as in a fairy tale of Hauff's, feet which dance by themselves ... all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when, as in the last instance, they prove capable of independent action in addition. (12)

and he traces the fear evoked in the reader back to the castration-complex.

By a similar process, though on a more abstract level, Dickens displaces the focus from a character to a favourite and typical gesture of his. Mr. Pocket in Great Expectations constantly tries to lift himself up by his hair.

(11) van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's", p. 420.

(12) Freud, "The Uncanny", p. 244.

Mme. Defarge, amidst all the horrors of the French Revolution, is hardly ever seen without her knitting (a significant attribute, which, together with her ominous personality, casts her in a Parcae-like role). Again this concentration on a typical movement, which is frequently repeated, emphasizes the mechanical aspect of human beings, likening them to automata in the Bergsonian sense:

The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine.
(13)

It is not only typical gestures but also typical phrases that characterize human beings, and in Dickens's novels they are common, again with the effect of displacement. Thus Mrs. Micawber is marked by her favourite phrase "I'll never leave Mr. Micawber", Pumblechook's "May I, sir, may I ..." haunts the reader throughout the second part of Great Expectations, while Codlin keeps reassuring Little Nell that "Codlin's the friend, not Short!" Likewise, Mr. Dorrit and Sarah Gamp are unmistakably determined through their manner of speech. Predictability is the distinguishing feature which, in E.M. Forster's definition, determines characters as types; Dickens's characters with their mechanical habits are types in perfection, or rather in exaggeration, for they tend to come closer to caricatures than to real human beings.

The last stage of this development is reached when Dickens identifies characters with the functions they fulfil in daily life. Thus in Little Dorrit the representatives of the legal and clerical trade are referred to merely as "Law" and "Church" respectively, and in Our Mutual Friend we meet Mr. Boots and Mr. Brewer. At this point the individual human being has been transformed into an abstract idea. For Bergson this confusion between characters and their function is one of the sources of comedy; with Dickens, however, it is not purely comic, but always has a satiric undertone to it.

(13) Henri Bergson, "Laughter", in: Comedy, ed. Wylie Sypher (Baltimore and London, 1956), p. 79.

These metonymic displacements, which will be discussed at greater length in chapter 4.2, are, as I said in the beginning, a typical stylistic feature of Dickens. Stefan Zweig traces Dickens's usage of this device back to his occupation as a short-hand writer at the legal court; and he claims that Dickens's method of listing his characters by means of characteristic peculiarities, closely resembles, and may have been derived from, the system of short-hand:

So in later days as an author he invented a kind of shorthand to reality, consisting of little signs instead of lengthy descriptions, an essence of observation distilled from the innumerable happenings of life. (14)

2.3 Transformation of Animals into Human Beings and of Human Beings into Animals

Dickens's metaphors and similes compare not only the animate to the inanimate, but also various species within the animate sphere. Although both animals and humans are living creatures, the barrier between them is generally considered strong enough to permit the creation of forceful and telling metaphors.

Among those animals which most often assume human features in Dickens's novels, birds probably figure most prominently. The following passage deals with the rooks at Chesney Wold:

The Rooks, swinging in their lofty houses in the elm-tree avenue, seem to discuss the question of the occupancy of the carriage as it passes underneath; some agreeing that Sir Leicester and my Lady are come down; some arguing with malcontents who won't admit it; now all consenting to consider the question disposed of; now, all breaking out again in violent debate, incited by one obstinate and drowsy bird, who will persist in putting in a last contradictory croak. (BH, p. 206)

(14) Quoted from: Sergei Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today", in: Film Form, ed. and translated by Jay Leyda (New York, 1949), p. 210.

As this passage shows, the rooks, from their bird's-eye perspective, are in the position of lookers-on and commentators of human life. In David Copperfield, the rooks in Canterbury are said to communicate with their relatives in London about Doctor Strong, and the rooks in the cathedral town Cloisterham are referred to as "sedate and clerical" birds. (ED, p. 40)

Another representative of the rook-species is to be found in Barnaby Rudge's raven, Grip. This raven is probably the most humanized bird in Dickens, walking "not in a hop, or walk, or run, but in a pace like that of a very particular gentleman with exceedingly tight boots on, trying to walk fast over loose pebbles" (BR, p. 100); but even more important, he has mastered the human language in its phonological reproduction. To be sure, his store of words and phrases is limited and meaningless, and the reproduction of it is mechanical in the sense that it does not enable him to sustain verbal communication. But in this respect he is very similar to Barnaby, his owner, who is considered to be mad and also speaks a language different from that of other people. In this sense, Grip's manner of speech serves as a counterpoint to that of Barnaby.

Domestic animals in Dickens's novels have a habit of reflecting the qualities and characteristics of their owners. The Crummles' pony, like any other member of their actors' group, is of a wilful and eccentric disposition, and Mr. Pecksniff's horse is declared to be very much like his master: "... full of promises, but of no performance" (MC, p. 117). Thus, these animals, like houses and pieces of furniture, serve as illustrations or foils for the characters who own them, reflecting exactly their various idiosyncrasies. And the relationship is reciprocated; for, if an equation is made between Mr. Pecksniff's horse and Mr. Pecksniff himself, the result is not only the (explicit) conferment of human features to the horse, but also the (implicit) suggestion of animal qualities in Mr. Pecksniff.

This takes us to the reversal of the process discussed above, that is, the transformation of human beings into animals. Again, as in the case of mechanization, the implications of an animal-metaphor need not necessarily be negative, its function being merely to give a colourful and slightly humorous description of a character. Mr. Chillip and Dora Spenlow's maiden

aunts in David Copperfield, and Poll Sweedlepipe in Martin Chuzzlewit are all compared to little birds, owing to their shy, unobtrusive, but friendly comportment. Mr. Grimwig in Oliver Twist is alleged to look like a parrot, and Doctor Strong, in David Copperfield's mind, is associated with a blind old horse. What all of these metaphors have in common is the notion of harmless idiosyncrasy which they attribute to the particular characters.

Animal metaphors become more alarming when they reflect the situation of a character who is treated like an animal by the other characters. Mr. Mell, facing the revolt of the pupils under Steerforth at Salem, is compared to an "animal baited by dogs" (DC, p. 147), and Betty Higden, who flees from the workhouse and the cold clutch of public charity, bears a close resemblance to a wounded animal. Both examples reflect the situation of a human being who is humiliated by society and degraded to an animal-like state, which does not allow him to keep the slightest trace of dignity. And we find the same situation again, though this time with a cynical rather than sentimental undertone, in Martin Chuzzlewit, where Ruth Pinch's private life is subjected to close scrutiny by her employer, who is "curious in the natural history and habits of the animal called Governess" (MC, p. 193). The treatment of human beings as animals finds explicit "justification" in the remarkable theory which John Willet develops with reference to Hugh, the hostler, in Barnaby Rudge:

"... that chap that can't read nor write, and has never had much to do with anything but animals, and has never lived in any way but like the animals he has lived among, is a animal. And", said Mr. Willet, ... "is to be treated accordingly." (BR, p. 140)

Hugh is probably that Dickensian character who comes closest to the animal-like state. As the illegitimate son of Sir John Chester and a gipsy girl who was hanged for stealing, he is ideally suited to be a victim of society's disregard and ill-treatment, and in consequence he has grown dull and slow like the horses he tends. The cruelty of his situation is even aggravated through the fact that his father participates and delights in Hugh's degradation to an animal by calling him "centaur"; and through his act of saving Barnaby, though not himself, from the gallows in the end, Hugh not only asserts, against all doubts, his fundamental humanity, but also re-

verses one of Dickens's implicit laws, by proving that a noble son may after all descend from an ignoble father.

Animal metaphors, finally, are used with exceeding frequency for the villains in Dickens's novels. Not surprisingly, it is predatory beasts that appear in this context. Thus Squeers is likened to a wild beast and Ralph Nickleby to a wolf. One of the finest examples of animal-metaphors is to be found in Dombey and Son; it refers to Mr. Carker:

And although it is not among the instincts wild or domestic of the cat to play the cards, feline from sole to crown was Mr. Carker the Manager, as he based in the strip of summerlight and warmth that shone upon his table and the ground as if they were a crooked dial-plate, and himself the only figure on it. With hair and whiskers deficient in colour at all times, but feebler than common in the rich sunshine, and more like the coat of a sandy tortoise-shell cat; with long nails, nicely pared and sharpened; with a natural antipathy to any speck of dirt, which made him pause sometimes and watch the falling motes of dust, and rub them off his smooth white hand or glossy linen... (DS, p. 372)

The analogy between Mr. Carker and a cat is particularly apt to intimate the cunning falsity of that character; the metaphor reappears throughout the novel in a leitmotif manner. In a similar way, the Marquis St. Evrémonde in A Tale of Two Cities is likened to a tiger. The effect of the simile is strengthened and the tiger-like qualities in the Marquis are inextricably connected with his character by Dickens's suggestion that like a figure in a fairy tale he is wont to change at random into a tiger:

Rustling about the room, his softly-slippered feet making no noise on the floor, he moved like a refined tiger: - looked like some enchanted marquis of the impenitently wicked sort, in story, whose periodical change into tiger form was either just going off, or just coming on. (TTC, p. 156)

Uriah Heep, one of the most unpleasant and villainous characters of Dickens's creation, is the one upon whom the largest collection of animal-metaphors is bestowed in a Dickens novel. He starts off as a snail and a fish, only to develop later on into a vulture, a bat and a baboon. It is interesting to notice how the tenor of these metaphors changes from unpleasant but harmless to unpleasant and dangerous as Uriah himself develops from an unimportant office boy to the influential partner of Mr. Wickfield, whose

property he has appropriated and whose daughter he intends to marry. What is also interesting is the fact that in the course of this metamorphosis Uriah ascends the evolutionary scale, so to speak; his progressive development to a higher species of being thus entails a higher degree of threatening potential.

Maybe the most subtle animal-metaphor will be found in Our Mutual Friend. It first appears in reference to Gaffer Hexam, who fishes the river for dead bodies, which he robs of their loose money before turning them over to the police. On the strength of this occupation, Dickens compares him repeatedly to a bird of prey. The allusion is self-evident: the animal who feeds on other animals. What is striking, now, is the fact that this metaphor reappears in the same novel under another name, so to speak: Mrs. Veneering, a nouveau-riche society lady, is frequently compared to an eagle: she has an "aquiline nose" and "aquiline fingers" (OMF, p. 162). Now "aquiline" is just another, more refined way of referring to a bird of prey, and indeed, the Veneerings, who feed at the expense of society and the lower classes, are no better than Gaffer Hexam who, in keeping with his lower station in life, feeds on the money of the dead.

Thus Dickens enriches his world through humanized animals and animal-like people. He was exceedingly aware of the animal qualities in mankind, and nowhere did he probably state this more explicitly than in the first chapter of Martin Chuzzlewit:

Firstly, ... it may be safely asserted, and yet without implying any direct participation in the Monboddie doctrine touching the probability of the human race having once been monkeys, that men do play very strange and extraordinary tricks. Secondly, and yet without trenching on the Blumenbach theory as to the descendants of Adam having a vast number of qualities which belong more particularly to swine than to any other class of animals in the creation, ... some men certainly are remarkable for taking uncommon good care of themselves. (MC, p. 56)

2.4 Animation and Mechanization as Rhetorical Devices

2.4.1 Animation and Mechanization by Means of Metaphor and Simile

Metaphor, according to Roman Jakobson's definition, is the development of a discourse along the line of similarity. (15) Its function consists in discovering a resemblance between two otherwise dissimilar things. This resemblance may be established explicitly (by using words of comparison, such as "like", "as", "as if"), in which case we speak of a simile; or it may be expressed implicitly, in which case we may speak of a metaphor proper. (16)

From what we have seen in the previous chapters, Dickens is a veritable master at discovering similarities between disparate things. Now, in his animation of objects and mechanization of human beings, he uses both similes and metaphors. As many of these comparisons, however, are rather bold and not always self-explanatory to the less imaginative reader, Dickens frequently resorts to the simile, thus insuring himself against the reproof of an all-too-fantastic and unrealistic view of the world. Take, for example, the description of Mr. F's Aunt in Little Dorrit:

This was an amazing little old woman, with a face like a staring wooden doll too cheap for expression, and a stiff yellow wig perched unevenly, as if the child who owned the doll had driven a tack through it anywhere; so that it only got fastened on. (LD, p. 198)

This is a witty and colourful comparison, which takes into account the eccentric nature of the old lady, who often will sit in company for hours without moving or speaking - like a wooden doll, indeed - while sharply scrutinizing everything around her, only to surprise us occasionally with an unintelligible and unjustified outburst against Arthur Clennam; an amusing description of an amusing character. If Dickens instead had written:

(15) Roman Jakobson, Fundamentals of Language, part III: "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances", second rev. ed. (The Hague, Paris, 1971).

(16) I am adopting the latter term from David Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing (London, 1977), p. 113.

* This was an amazing little old woman with the face of a staring wooden doll too cheap for expression, and a stiff yellow wig perched unevenly, through which the child who owned the doll had driven a tack ...

the closeness of the staring wooden doll to a mask or a skull, and the menacing violence conveyed by the act of driving a tack through a wig into the head would be much more immediate. This description would then, unnecessarily, contain a grotesque, even nightmarish, quality. I say unnecessarily, because grotesqueness and nightmare would be in no way congenial to the whimsical, but otherwise harmless, and, from the point of view of plot, unimportant character of Mr. F's Aunt.

On the other hand, Dickens uses the metaphor proper when he wants to achieve a strong and lasting effect on the reader. The following, for instance, is the introduction of that pathetic character, Twemlow, in Our Mutual Friend:

There was an innocent piece of dinner-furniture that went upon easy castors and was kept over a livery stable-yard in Duke Street, St. James's, when not in use, to whom the Veneerings were a source of blind confusion. The name of this article was Twemlow. Being first cousin to Lord Snigsworth, he was in frequent requisition, and at many houses might be said to represent the dining-table in its normal state. Mr. and Mrs. Veneering, for example, arranging a dinner, habitually started with Twemlow, and then put leaves in him, or added guests to him. Sometimes the table consisted of Twemlow and half a dozen leaves; sometimes, of Twemlow and a dozen leaves; sometimes, Twemlow was pulled out to his utmost extent of twenty leaves. (OMF, p. 48)

The comparison between Twemlow and a piece of furniture is so implicit and its elaboration so consistent that half-way through the passage the reader is left in doubt as to whether this is now an object personified (through the proper name of Twemlow), or a human being objectified. This reflects Twemlow's situation exactly: being related to a member of the aristocracy, he becomes a handy tool in the eyes of an ambitious, nouveau-riche couple who want to climb up the social ladder. No other, more explicit, form of comparison could render the absolute degradation and de-valuation of a human being through a utilitarian society as drastically as the actual metaphor. And through no other figure of comparison would the underlying dissimilarity, which is part of every comparison, so much rouse the read-

er's indignation as through the metaphor. The strength and emphasis of this metaphor, furthermore, are fully justified, as it is related directly to the main theme of the novel, that is the cult of money and social position with total disregard for the individual human being.

Another point must be mentioned here. Owing to the force and impressiveness of this initial metaphor, we never re-encounter Twemlow in the course of the novel without thinking of a table. What Dickens has done here, as well as in all the other cases of animation and mechanization, is to superimpose two images onto each other with an effect reminiscent of that achieved by montage in film and photography. And montage, it will be remembered, has been associated by Jakobson with the axis of metaphor.

Every once in a while Dickens extends his animistic metaphors to conceit-like complexes, thus emphasizing and elaborating on the similarity he has discovered between an object and a human being. A fine example of this is the transformation of a chair into an old man in "The Bagman's Story", one of the interpolated tales in the Pickwick Papers:

Tom gazed at the chair; and suddenly as he looked at it, a most extraordinary change seemed to come over it. The carving of the back gradually assumed the lineaments and expression of an old shrivelled human face; the damask cushion became an antique, flapped waistcoat; the round knobs grew into a couple of feet, encased in red cloth slippers; and the whole chair looked like a very ugly old man, of the previous century, with his arms a-kimbo. Tom sat up in bed, and rubbed his eyes to dispel the illusion. No. The chair was an ugly old gentleman; and what was more, he was winking at Tom Smart. (PP, p. 265)

Thus, step by step, the analogy is developed, passing from one part of the body to the next in a manner which reminds us of Marvell's poem "To his Coy Mistress". Such elaborate metaphors reveal Dickens's accurate sense of detail and his playful enjoyment of analogies between disparate things; they also increase the metaphoric (and thereby poetic) quality of the text as a whole, since they always represent an interruption of the contiguity of the narrative discourse.

Summing up, we can say that Dickens makes abundant use of both similes and metaphors proper, expressing in the one case playful or tentative

analogies, and emphatic identifications in the other. Although he always uses both figures, we can, in the course of his novels, detect a shift from simile to metaphor. If we accept Northrop Frye's distinction between simile and metaphor as models of realistic and mythical literature respectively, (17) then we might take this shift as an indication that Dickens's writing changed from realistic to mythical, a conclusion which is very much in keeping with the current theories about Dickens.

2.4.2 Animation and Mechanization by Means of Metonymy

Metonymy is defined by Roman Jakobson as the development of a discourse on the basis of contiguity. (18) Dickens's mind, as is shown in chapter 2.2.2 particularly, runs largely on metonymic lines. In his novels, objects derive their characteristics from the person who owns them, and that person, in turn, is defined by the world that surrounds him. This is illustrated very clearly in Dickens's sketch of the beginning of a story which he never actually got down to writing:

... beginning with a house abandoned by a family fallen into reduced circumstances. Their old furniture there, and numberless tokens of their old comforts. Inscriptions under the bells downstairs - "Mr. John's Room", "Miss Caroline's Room". Great gardens trimly kept to attract a tenant: but no one in them. A landscape without figures. Billiard Room: table covered up, like a body. Great stables without horses, and great coachhouses without carriages. Grass growing in the chinks of the stone-paving, this bright cold winter day ... (19)

For the 20th century reader this way of opening a story and introducing its characters by means of their belongings is not new: it is a technique

(17) Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays (Princeton, N.J., 1957), p. 136.

(18) Jakobson, Fundamentals of Language.

(19) Quoted from John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens (London, no year), p. 819.

frequently employed by film producers through a series of close-up shots (which in Jakobson's theory is basically a metonymic device).

Taylor Stoehr defines Dickens's use of metonymy as an "interest in the details of things" (20), and indeed this interest does form the basis of Dickens's animistic metonymies. For Dickens perceives entities as the sum of the details of which they are composed. For him a man, then, is not an integral human figure, but rather a compound of arms, legs, trunk and head, each of which is again subdivided into further elements, such as fingers, toes, hair, etc. Any process by which one of those parts is made to stand for the whole man represents a displacement, and is therefore metonymic. Synecdoches such as these are, of course, very common in Dickens. We have seen above (chapter 2.2.2), how the essence of a character may be summed up and concentrated in one part of his body (even, paradoxically, in an inorganic one, as in the case of the wooden leg), which thus gains a sense of autonomy.

These parts of the human body are sometimes, in turn, replaced by clothes and similar implements, the result of which is invariably comic. David Copperfield describes a meeting with Mr. Barkis as follows:

He was too rheumatic to be shaken hands with, but he begged me to shake the tassel on the top of his nightcap, which I did most cordially. (DC, p. 365)

The humour here lies not only in the "synecdochic" wish of Mr. Barkis, but even more so in its gratification by David, which carries the metonymy from the mental level to that of action.

Another funny displacement occurs in a feigned love-scene between the Lammles in Our Mutual Friend:

"Sophronia!" murmured Alfred. "My life!" and kissed her hand. In return for which she kissed his watch-chain. (OMF, p. 310)

(20) Stoehr, p. 270.

Again the displacement of Mrs. Lammle's affection for Alfred's watch-chain rather than himself is funny; but funnier still through the reader's knowledge of the two characters' profound indifference towards each other, which makes it highly probable that in Sophronia's eyes her husband's watch-chain is the most precious part of him.

The hypostatization of the gestures and key-phrases, furthermore, which signal the appearance of a character, are also fully metonymic.

There are also examples in Dickens's novels where the whole stands for the part. This is the case with the personification of place-names (cf. pp. 50 f.). Here Dickens takes entities (human beings) and makes them elements of a more complex order of organism, displacing the focus from the individual element to the whole community.

Metonymy is usually considered as more realistic than metaphor. In Dickens's novels, however, we cannot help feeling that his metonymies evoke a world which is as unrealistic as the world of his metaphors. The reason for this seems to me to lie in the fact that the world of his characters is ruled by a contiguity which is entirely of his own making, a product of his fancy, and there I agree with Hillis Miller who writes:

The metonymic associations which Boz makes are fancies rather than facts, impositions on the signs he sees of stock conventions, no mirroring, but interpretation, which is to say, lie. (21)

Nevertheless, it is a lie which contributes to the deep enjoyment which the reading of his novels offers.

(21) J. Hillis Miller & David Borowitz, Charles Dickens and George Cruikshank (University of California, 1971), p. 35.

2.4.3 Foregrounding of "Dead" Language by Means of Animation and Mechanization (22)

Dickens, as we have seen, makes abundant use of metaphors and metonymies, using language as an instrument to express analogies that he found between objects and people or between parts and the whole. However, he not only creates new and surprising analogies but is also profoundly aware of those analogies already existing, albeit no longer perceived, in the so-called "dead" metaphors and metonymies. According to G. Leech, metaphors and metonymies are linguistic deviations from the "collocational core", that is, from the non-figurative, literal usage of language. (23) The English language, however, contains a number of idiomatic rhetorical figures which have so much become integral parts of common usage that their ambiguity is no longer perceived by the ordinary speaker. This is what I refer to as "dead" metaphors, metonymies, or puns and they provide another source of animistic and mechanizing imagery to be tapped by Dickens.

Dickens's method is based upon what we might call a deliberate misunderstanding of a given figure of speech, taking it in its literal rather than in its accepted figurative sense. Often the foregrounding of dead metaphors thus gains a humorous effect, as, for instance, when Dickens likens the leg of a table or chair in anatomical consistency to the human leg; or when he writes about Mrs. Lupin, the kindly owner of the Blue Dragon, later to become Mrs. Mark Tapley.

- (22) I have adopted the term "foregrounding", Paul Garvin's translation of the Czech concept of aktualisace, denoting a rhetorical device by which a poet, through violation of rules and conventions, "transcends the normal communicative resources of the language, and awakens the reader, by freeing him from the grooves of cliché expression to a new perceptivity." (cf. Roger Fowler, ed. A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms (London, 1973), p. 75.)
- (23) Geoffrey N. Leech, "Linguistics and the Figures of Rhetoric", in: Essays on Style and Language, ed. Roger Fowler (London, 1966).

She was a widow, but years ago had passed through her state of weeds, and burst into flower again; and in full bloom she had continued ever since; and in full bloom she was now; with roses on her apple skirts, and roses on her bodice, roses in her lap, roses in her cheeks - aye, and roses, worth the gathering too, on her lips, for that matter. (MC, p. 79)

The reader is delighted by the way in which the pun in the phrase "to be in a state of weeds" is activated through the adoption and elaboration of the meaning "plant" for "weeds", instead of its idiomatic sense of "widow's dress", and by the way in which this re-activated pun is immediately connected with another common metaphor by which a pretty woman is referred to as "being in bloom", or "blooming".

Dickens's technique of foregrounding not only serves to evoke sheer delight and innocent humour; sometimes it serves as a vehicle for irony. This is the case, for instance, when *Oliver Twist*, at the beginning of the novel, is presented to the board of the workhouse:

"Bow to the board", said Bumble. Oliver brushed away two or three tears that were lingering in his eyes, and seeing no board but the table, fortunately bowed to that. (OT, p. 53)

Not only do we realize, at this moment, that there is a hidden metonymic displacement which originally led from the denomination of a table to that of a group of people professionally seated around it, but we recognize, in addition, that in their stiffness and complete indifference to Oliver, the board and the Board are indeed similar; thus Dickens not only revives a dead metonymy, but fills it with metaphoric significance, too.

Another meaningful foregrounding of a metonymy is to be found in Hard Times, where Dickens talks about the "hands", that is, the workers, adding that they are

... like the lower creatures of the seashore, only hands and stomach. (HT, p. 103)

It is fairly common usage to call workers "hands", but Dickens reminds us of the ease with which people in a utilitarian system might be reduced, not

only linguistically, but also emotionally, to the level of their functionality. Dorothy van Ghent writes in this context:

The Coketown "hands" have been approximately reduced to those members for which they are named... (24)

A further example of the way in which Dickens activates "dead" language is his tendency to imbue stale clichés and hackneyed phrases with new meaning. This is a device which recurs particularly frequently in Pickwick Papers, where it figures as a characteristic feature of Sam Weller's speaking habits:

"Now with regard to the matter on which I, with the concurrence of the gentlemen, sent for you," said Mr. Pickwick.

"That's the pint, sir", interposed Sam; "out with it, as the father said to the child, when he swallowed a farden." (PP, p. 235)

Or, to give another example:

"... I take the privilidge of the day, Mary, my dear, - as the gent'-l'm'n in difficulties did, ven he valked out of a Sunday." (PP, p. 542) (25)

By placing stale and hackneyed phrases such as "out with it" or "to take the privilege of the day" into a particular context in which their original meaning is concretely illustrated and thus re-activated, Dickens in fact animates "dead" or mechanical language. (We shall come back to this aspect in chapter 4.4.) Sheila Smith recognizes the significance of Dickens's activation of dead language when she writes:

In the same way that Dickens is aware of the life of non-living objects he is also aware of the life of the words which he uses. Dickens, at his best, is the unsleeping enemy of the cliché, the phrase which has been used so often that it is polished and smoothed until it slips un-awares into ordinary speech...

(24) van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's", p. 424.

(25) This analogy of Sam's alludes to the fact that legal proceedings were suspended on Sundays.

... Much of the fascination of Dickens's novels can be explained by his ability to twist a stale phrase into surprising life, revealing in it novel possibilities, and keeping the reader's mind alert and interested. (26)

Thus Dickens's reactivation of dead metaphors and metonymies and of clichés and hackneyed phrases again represents a movement towards more concreteness, as does his personification of ideas; through it he manages to bring the hidden layers of the meaning of language to the reader's consciousness.

2.4.4 The Combination of Metaphor and Metonymy in Dickens's Texts

So far the two figures of metaphor and metonymy respectively, have, for reasons of clarity, been considered separately. However, this is a procedure which might lead to the assumption that there is always a clear-cut division between them in Dickens's texts. Nothing could be further from the truth, for it is indeed through the mixture and complementary integration of the two tropes that the descriptive richness of Dickens's style is achieved.

The following is a passage from David Copperfield, and it describes David's first encounter with Uriah Heep:

When the pony-chaise stopped at the door, and my eyes were intent upon the house, I saw a cadaverous face appear at a small window on the ground floor ... and quickly disappear. The low arched door then opened, and the face came out. It was quite as cadaverous as it had looked in the window, though in the grain of it there was that tinge of red which is sometimes to be observed in the skins of red-haired people. It belonged to a red-haired person - a youth of fifteen, as I take it now, but looking much older - whose hair was cropped as

(26) Sheila M. Smith, "Anti-Mechanism and the Comic in the Writings of Charles Dickens", in: Renaissance and Modern Studies, iii (1959), pp. 132 - 133.

close as the closest stubble; who had hardly any eyebrows, and no eyelashes, and eyes of a red-brown, so unsheltered and unshaded, that I remember wondering how he went to sleep. He was high-shouldered and bony ... and he had a long, lank skeleton hand, which particularly attracted my attention ... (DC, p. 275)

This passage exemplifies how the same theme - here the figure of Uriah Heep - is treated both metonymically and metaphorically. The metaphor reveals to us Uriah's resemblance to a living corpse (cadaverous face; bony body; lank, skeleton hand), while the metonymy displaces the essence of the person of Uriah Heep into his face ("the face came out"), which, half-way through the passage, figures as the grammatical subject ("it"). This displacement reinforces the effect of a lifeless and ghostly human being evoked by the metaphor; combined, they lead to the creation of one of Dickens's most uncanny characters.

But metaphor and metonymy do not merely co-exist alongside each other within a passage; at times they are superimposed upon each other. Take, for example, the description of Mrs. Clennam's house:

It was a double house, with long, narrow, heavily-framed windows. Many years ago, it had had it in its mind to slide down sideways; it had been propped up, however, and was leaning on some half-dozen gigantic crutches... (LD, p. 71)

Here we have firstly the case of an animated object, as discussed in chapter 2.1.1. The animation is achieved by means of a metaphor which develops a similarity between a house and a human being. This is done by applying to the house a kind of vocabulary normally reserved for human beings ("it had had it in its mind", "[it] was leaning on ... gigantic crutches"). But the significance of the passage is not confined to the comparison of the house to a crippled person. Mrs. Clennam, who lives in that house, has herself been an invalid for years. The displacement of the state of infirmity from the owner of the house to the house itself works on the basis of contiguity. Thus we have an animistic metaphor serving a metonymic purpose. Such "metonymic metaphors", as David Lodge calls them, (27)

(27) Lodge, p. 101.

occur extremely frequently in Dickens, as we have seen in chapter 2.1.1. Their impact is considerably stronger than that of a mere metaphor or metonymy; through this double dimension they manifest a development from the rhetorical to the symbolic level. Thus Mrs. Clennam's house is a concrete reality within the text; but at the same time, through the metaphoric correspondence of that house to an invalid human being, and its contiguous connection to its inhabitant, the house serves as a constant reference to Mrs. Clennam, or, in other words, it stands symbolically for Mrs. Clennam.

Through his metaphors and metonymies Dickens has created an extraordinary world as well as extraordinary characters, but it is through his combination of the two devices that he has managed to coordinate his world and his characters into a significant relationship.

III THE LITERARY FUNCTION OF ANIMATION AND MECHANIZATION

3.1 Animation and Mechanization as Elements of Humour

Dickens, as is well-known, ranks among England's foremost humorist writers; indeed, his achievement in that field is so great that his name and its derivation, "Dickensian", have become almost synonymous with the notion of humour. The concept of humour itself has been the subject of many critical and analytical studies, but, as James R. Kincaid correctly pointed out, (1) it was Henri Bergson who defined humour in terms of animation and mechanization. For the present purpose, this definition provides us with the most useful starting point.

For Bergson, the conflict between the organic and the inorganic, between life and matter, represents the source of all forms of humour. Comedy, then, is the result of "something living encrusted by something mechanical": (2)

The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine. (3)

This is an accurate formulation of the principle of mechanization, and it is exactly what Dickens is doing when he describes characters as if they were statues or pieces of furniture. Characteristic in this context, then, is the exchange of life for matter, of animated flexibility for mechanical rigidity or stiffness. This stiffness may manifest itself in a character's outward appearance, in his movements, in his gestures or stock phrases or finally in his complete identification with the function or institution he represents.

(1) James R. Kincaid, Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter (Oxford, 1971), p. 11.

(2) Kincaid, p. 10.

(3) Bergson, p. 79.

In all of the cases of mechanization in Dickens's novels, be it Jaggers' eternally pointing finger, Pumblechook's haunting refrain "May I", or Dickens's continuous reference to a bishop as "Church", we get the impression of a wooden doll or of an automaton rather than that of a living human being.

An important element in these cases of mechanization is their leitmotif-nature, that is the fact that the mechanical features are repeated as soon as the character in question makes his appearance; this leitmotif-quality is in itself a mechanizing device, since it tends to gratify the reader's anticipations and expectations with the regularity of a jack-in-the-box.

But why is this funny? Bergson gives us the answer:

Any incident is comic that calls our attention to the physical in a person, when it is the moral side that is concerned. (4)

In other words, even if we tried to sympathize with Jaggers, Pumblechook or the bishop, Dickens prevents us from doing so by continually bringing us back to the façade, to the exterior of these characters.

During the actual process of writing his novels, Dickens sometimes changed his attitude towards a certain character, and it is interesting to notice how this change manifests itself in the use of mechanistic devices. Dick Swiveller in The Old Curiosity Shop, for instance, is introduced as a slightly ridiculous character and one who, in his complexity with Fred Trent, seems to be rather dubious. Dickens mechanizes him by his outward appearance - he is dressed like a scarecrow - and by giving him a language full of clichés and hackneyed phrases:

"But what", said Mr. Swiveller with a sigh, "what is the odds so long as the fire of soul is kindled at the taper of conviviality, and the wing of friendship never moults a feather! What is the odds so long as the spirit is expanded by means of rosy wine and the present moment is the least happiest of our existence." (OCS, p. 60)

(4) Bergson, p. 93.

Although marked as a potentially negative character at the outset of the novel, Dick rises in the estimation of the reader when he comes into contact with the Brass family and proves to be immune to their hypocrisy. But what really clinches matters is his interest in and ensuing kindness towards the little, nameless servant girl on whom he imaginatively, and without a trace of malice, bestows the grand title of "Marchioness", and whom he educates and eventually marries. And he is even allowed to play the crucial part in effecting Kit's release from prison, thereby foiling Quilp's most hideous scheme.

This metamorphosis from a shady and ridiculous character to a high-spirited but useful young gentleman is clearly reflected in a notable decrease and ultimate absence of mechanical attributes. This is most clearly manifested in his language, which in the end, though always jovial, is no longer hackneyed. This de-mechanizing development represents a shift of emphasis from the physical to the moral, that is from the external to the internal aspect of Dick Swiveller's personality.

In analogy to the principle of mechanization cited above (cf. p. 78), the principle of animation could then be formulated as follows: Things, objects are comic to the extent that they remind us of human beings. This is based upon Bergson's primary axiom, namely, "the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly human." (5) If mechanization is based upon a substitution of matter for life, animation, conversely, represents a triumph of life over matter. As Bergson says:

You may laugh at a hat, but what you are making fun of, in this case, is not the piece of felt or straw, but the shape that men have given it, - the human caprice whose mould it has assumed. (6)

The numerous examples of animated clothes in Dickens's work (most notable possibly in his Sketches, in the passage about the second-hand clothes-shop in Monmouth Street; cf. p. 40) illustrate this statement. Likewise, when Dickens compares houses, clocks, and pieces of furniture to human

(5) Bergson, p. 62.

(6) Bergson, p. 62.

beings, the comedy is not based upon their natural inorganic essence, but rather on the humanized form the author has bestowed upon them; it lies ultimately in the human, or more specifically, poetic imagination, which is able to perceive similarities between things and people.

What seems to me important in this context, though, is not just the perception of resemblance between a given object and a human being, but the sense of independence with which Dickens frequently endows that particular object. Thus, as we have seen in chapter 2.1.1, chairs tumble, a house leans forward as if trying to watch people passing by, and a clock constantly admonishes little Paul Dombey. These objects are provided not only with human features, but are accorded human qualities and human behaviour as well; by inverting Bergson's formula about mechanization (cf. p. 79), we could say, then, that comedy arises from the suggestion that objects have an inner life of their own, thus calling our attention to the (potential) moral rather than to the physical aspect of those objects. The world of animated objects in Dickens's novels thus clearly represents an inversion of the world of mechanized people; and inversion of reality, according to Bergson, is one of the basic elements of humour.

As the following chapters will show, Dickens frequently charges his animating and particularly his mechanizing imagery with more than a merely humorous function, a fact which has been recognized and appreciated more and more by critics in the last few years. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that a vast amount of Dickens's animistic and mechanistic output has no other purpose than that of amusing and delighting his readers, a fact which, as I pointed out in my "Introduction", has often been neglected by critics. Particularly in his early novels, Dickens frequently animates and mechanizes for the mere enjoyment of it. In this sense, both animation and mechanization may become an end in themselves - animation for the sake of animation - which is clearly an early realization of the aesthetes' principle of "l'art pour l'art". We find an example of this in Martin Chuzzlewit in the description of the fountain by the Temple, which witnesses the beginning of John Westlock's courtship of Ruth Pinch:

Merrily the fountain plashed and plashed, until the dimples, merging into one another, swelled into a general smile, that covered the whole surface of the basin.

...

Merrily the fountain leaped and danced, and merrily the smiling dimples twinkled and expanded more and more, until they broke into a laugh against the basin's rim, and vanished. (MC, p. 765)

There is no maliciousness, no social-critical undertone to this description; nothing but the pure delight in the discovery of a similarity between the ever-changing surface of a fountain basin and the equally lively miming of a human face have induced the author to create this animating imagery.

At times the comedy of the animated object is extended from a mere description to an actual full-length scene; this is the case when objects display movement and energy of their own - an energy which is usually juxtaposed to the intentions and efforts of the human being to whom they belong.

The following passage, for instance, shows us Mr. Pickwick in full pursuit of his truant hat:

There are very few moments in a man's existence when he experiences so much ludicrous distress, or meets with so little charitable commiseration, as when he is in pursuit of his own hat. A vast deal of coolness, and a peculiar degree of judgment, are requisite in catching a hat. A man must not be precipitate, or he runs over it; he must not push into the opposite extreme, or he loses it altogether. The best way is, to keep gently upon the object of pursuit, to be wary and cautious, to watch your opportunity well, get gradually before it, then make a rapid dive, seize it by the crown, and stick it firmly on your head: smiling pleasantly all the time, as if you thought it as good a joke as anybody else.

There was a fine gentle wind, and Mr. Pickwick's hat rolled sportively before it. The wind puffed, and Mr. Pickwick puffed, and the hat rolled over and over as merrily as a lively porpoise in a strong tide; and on it might have rolled, far beyond Mr. Pickwick's reach, had not its course been providentially stopped, just as that gentleman was on the point of resigning it to its fate. (PP, pp. 120/121)

As the preliminary narratorial comment makes clear, the incident described is one that might occur at any time to any man. The notion of universality, of general relevance, is, according to Bergson, one of the chief ingredients of comedy. Unlike tragedy, which tends to represent the fate of the individual, the comic resorts to scenes and situations that belong to the stock repertoire not only of comedy but of human life in general. The scene above is a variation of the well-known theme of a man struggling with a

"malicious" object, a theme so popular in comedy that it represents an indispensable part of any clown's repertoire. The comic element lies in the fact that the apparent trial of strength takes place between two such unlike (and unlikely) partners: man, the most highly developed form of being and triumph of all creation, at battle with a mere lifeless object which, however, seems to be strangely animated and to all appearances superior to its opponent. In our example in the sentence "the wind puffed, and Mr. Pickwick puffed, and the hat rolled over and over as merrily as a lively porpoise in a strong tide" the hat is animated by being described as "merry" and compared to a "lively porpoise". In addition, we find another animated (and animating) agent in the wind, which seems to be setting the tone and rhythm in this scene, as the sequence "the wind puffed, and Mr. Pickwick puffed" suggests. Furthermore, the arrangement of the sentence reflects Mr. Pickwick's situation of dependence on his two adversaries, which dictate his pace and movements, thus reducing his actions to the reactions of a mechanical object.

This is an illustration of one of Bergson's fundamental laws, which says that: "Any arrangement of acts and events is comic which gives us, in a single combination, the illusion of life and the distinct impression of a mechanical arrangement." (7)

There are numerous incidents of this kind in Dickens's novels, among them the famous scene in Great Expectations, where Joe Gargery fights a hopeless battle with his hat at Pip's London apartment; a scene which both in theme and elaboration bears a strong similarity to the one discussed above.

In the foregoing discussion we have come across words such as "appearance", "clown" and "comedy", terms which point towards a particular literary genre with which Dickens was more than familiar and which probably influenced both his animistic and his humoristic vision of the world. I am referring to the popular theatre, of which Dickens was a keen supporter and which he repeatedly integrated into his novels. According to William Axton, the outstanding feature of the nineteenth century popular theatre

(7) Bergson, p. 105.

was its mixture of reality and fantasy. This became most evident in the burlesque forms of the theatre, such as the pantomime, for instance, in which comic animism was a frequent device and in which clowns were disguised as animals, vegetables, or kitchen implements. Axton writes in this context:

There...Dickens must have been pleased to see the sprightly transposition of animate and inanimate worlds, where pantomime clowns became animals, vegetables, and objects, and where machinery, inanimate things, and vegetable life turned into people or took on some extraordinary activity of their own. (8)

The humour of the burlesque depends largely on its integral comic absurdity, that is, on the combination and collocation of unrelated and even incompatible elements. This same comic absurdity is also the basis of Dickens's animistic (and mechanistic) vision. This takes us back to the point I stressed before, namely, that comedy - which was defined by Theophile Gautier as the "logic of the absurd" - frequently becomes an end in itself in Dickens's use of animism. What manifests itself here, apart from the delight in the absurd, is Dickens's enjoyment of the playful. Like Midas, who turned everything he touched into gold, Dickens moves through his novels animating the inorganic and mechanizing the living. In this respect he reminds us of a child who walks through a toy-shop, setting all the mechanical toys in motion and stopping them at random. And it is, indeed, in this playfulness, this inexhaustible creative energy, exercised not for any pragmatic or didactic reasons but for the enjoyment of it that the affinity between Dickens's vision and the vision of a child becomes most obvious. It has been declared by several critics that Dickens's vision of the world strongly resembles that of a child. This may be true, but the inference is not necessarily negative and pejorative. For (and this is what I shall try to show in chapter IV of this study) it is mainly in this playfully innocent, unpretentious and imaginative approach to life that Dickens's moral message lies.

(8) Axton, p. 29.

3.2 Animation and Mechanization as Elements of Satire

A division between satire and humour is bound to be problematic, since satire is after all one particular form of humour and therefore based on the same generic principle. Satire, like humour in general, tries to provoke laughter from the reader by means of distorting reality and exploring the absurd; and both satire and humour use the technique of inversion as their instrument.

But whereas mere humour may content itself with the effect created, satire is always connected with the purpose of criticism; this criticism may be aimed at an individual or at society at large, at a human vice in particular or at a public grievance in general.

Dickens, as is well known, was keenly alive to the shortcomings both of his fellow-men and of the society and the age he lived in, and consequently lost no opportunity to expose them through ridicule. Thus, particularly through his attacks on society and social conditions, he placed his novels into a framework of temporal and social relevance. And here once more, animation and particularly mechanization play a vital part, as they provide Dickens with an effective weapon for launching his attacks. For as was shown in chapter II, much of Dickens's animistic and mechanistic imagery is based upon analogies that exist not merely on a superficial, physical level but reflect fundamental human qualities and attitudes.

As a variation of Bergson's statement about comedy (cf. p. 80) we could say that satire does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly human. It follows then that man or mankind is the primary target for the satirist's attack. It will, therefore, not be surprising to find that Dickens, in his satire, resorts less to the medium of animation, and more to that of mechanization and animal imagery. In other words, he criticizes people by referring to them in terms of objects or animals. A pleasing illustration of satirical mechanization can be found in Little Dorrit:

Christopher Casby was a mere Inn signpost without any Inn - an invitation to rest and be thankful, when there was no place to put up at, and nothing whatever to be thankful for. (LD, p. 190)

With this somewhat startling metaphor, "an Inn signpost without any Inn", Dickens unmasks, with wit and originality, the character of Christopher Casby, who is an impostor and an extremely selfish man. The absurdity of the vehicle - for of what use could an inn signpost be without an inn? - thus serves to expose the absurdity of the character's behaviour. In the same novel the hired companion, Mrs. General, is described as follows:

A cool, waxy, blown-out woman, who had never lighted well. (LD, p. 503)

Again in this case, the satiric effect is achieved by means of comparing a human being to an object deficient in its function, that is, a blown-out candle which has never burnt brightly; thus Dickens characterizes the lack of warmth, vitality and love which stamp the personality of Mrs. General.

In David Copperfield, Miss Murdstone is introduced in the following way:

She brought with her, two uncompromising hard black boxes, with her initials on the lids in hard brass nails. When she paid the coachman she took her money out of a hard steel purse, and she kept the purse in a very jail of a bag which hung upon her arm by a heavy chain, and shut up like a bite. I had never, at that time, seen such a metallic lady altogether as this Miss Murdstone was. (DC, p. 97)

Here the character in question is described in terms of the objects which belong to her and which in consequence bestow upon her the quality of their material - metal. Although this is the first time that we encounter Jane Murdstone, we are able to infer from the mechanizing description - "a metallic lady" - that she is not an altogether agreeable character. As I mentioned in chapter 2.2.1, comparisons between human beings and metal or stone almost always point to hard-heartedness, lack of feeling and inflexible rigidity in that particular character.

In a similar way, animal imagery is used to de-humanize human beings and indicate their affinities with lower, more primitive species. Mr. Pecksniff, in his amorous pursuit of Mary Graham, is likened to an "affectionate boa-constrictor" (MC, p. 551), and the insidiousness of Bentley Drummle in Great Expectations is captured when Jaggers confers upon him the nickname "the spider". One of the most eloquent animal metaphors can be found in

Hard Times, where young Tom Gradgrind - a combination of extreme selfishness and immaturity - is labelled with the epithet "the whelp".

In the cases of animal imagery we do not change, strictly speaking, from the animate to the inanimate world; nevertheless, the transposition human → animal is similar to the process of mechanization, as it is based upon disregard or negation of the complexity of human nature, substituting for it the instinctive simple-mindedness and limitation of one particular animal quality. This one-sided presentation is a technique which is typical of the satirist; it is a means of conveying the intended attack or criticism. Thus James Sutherland, in his study on English satire, writes:

What, then, does the satirist see, for he certainly sees something? Not the truth, but one aspect of the truth; not the whole man, but one side of him... To secure our agreement he is prepared to ignore much of the evidence and exaggerate the rest. The satirist proceeds characteristically by drastic simplification. (9)

This technique of over-simplification and exaggeration in the presentation of characters leads straight to the field of caricature, a subject which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Dickens's mechanistic satire is not only directed against individual human weaknesses and vices, but just as frequently aimed at society as a whole. In Our Mutual Friend, for instance, we find an astonishing number of people who are partially or wholly transformed into wood. This is illustrated by Twemlow (cf. p. 67), who is likened to a table, by Mrs. Podsnap, who is compared to a rocking-horse, and most forcibly of all by Silas Wegg, who, in addition to his metaphorically attested "wooden" personality, actually has a wooden leg and is expected shortly to grow another one. The mechanization thus extends from the metaphoric level to that of reality. This collocation of wood-imagery, applied to various characters, indicates that it is not so much an individual as a social deficiency which is here under attack. Wood in this case functions as the expression of the rigidity and deadness of society, particularly of the so-called higher society and those aspiring to belong to it. In this sense J.R. Kincaid writes:

(9) James Sutherland, English Satire (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 15/16.

Wegg is the epitome of this dead society, the stuff from which rocking-horses like Mrs. Podsnap are made. (10)

Similarly, in Martin Chuzzlewit, Dickens criticizes the staleness and uniformity of American society by describing them in terms of weed-imagery:

When the major rose from his rocking-chair before the stove, and so disturbed the hot air and balmy whiff of soup which fanned their brows, the odour of stale tobacco became so decidedly prevalent as to leave no doubt of its proceeding mainly from that gentleman's attire. Indeed, as Martin walked behind him to the bar-room, he could not help thinking that the great square major, in his listlessness and languor, looked very much like a stale weed himself: such as might be hoed out of the public garden, with great advantage to the decent growth of that preserve, and tossed on some convenient dung-hill. They encountered more weeds in the bar-room, some of whom (being thirsty souls as well as dirty) were pretty stale in one sense, and pretty fresh in another. (MC, pp. 332/333)

This is no more a purely humorous analogy between the animate and the inanimate world; the choice of the epithet "stale" and the reference to the "convenient dung-hill" mark this analogy as a biting satirical attack upon the society thus described. This is what Hillis Miller refers to when he writes:

Dickens's comic vision of America culminates in a world of puppets who are reduced to their gestures, their grimaces, their imitations of one another. These puppets exist entirely as appearance, as a surface which rigidly and mechanically imitates life. (11)

Thus Dickens satirizes individual characters and society by means of mechanization. Not always, however, is the implicit criticism or attack aimed at the person who has been mechanized. As I have shown on an earlier occasion, (cf. pp. 53 f.) it is not only the narrator who mechanizes his characters; there are also a number of characters in his novels who treat other characters like objects or animals, thereby depriving them of their human dignity. Thus children rank among the primary victims of mechanizing adults. In Hard Times, for instance, in the chapter entitled "Mur-

(10) Kincaid, p. 249.

(11) Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels, p. 134.

dering the Innocents", the children at school are described as little vessels, each designed to be filled with a profusion of facts. Another memorable example can be found in Great Expectations, where Pip, during Christmas dinner, finds himself placed into an embarrassing analogy to the pork he and the rest of the company are about to consume:

[Mr. Pumblechook said:] "Look at Pork alone. There's a subject! If you want a subject, look at Pork!"

"True, sir. Many a moral for the young," returned Mr. Wopsle; and I knew he was going to lug me in, before he said it; "might be deduced from that text."

("You listen to this," said my sister to me, in a severe parenthesis.)

...

"Swine," pursued Mr. Wopsle, in his deepest voice, and pointing his fork at my blushes, as if he were mentioning my christian name; "Swine were the companions of the prodigal. The gluttony of Swine is put before us, as an example to the young... What is detestable in a pig, is more detestable in a boy."

...

"Besides," said Mr. Pumblechook, turning sharp on me, "think what you've got to be grateful for. If you'd been born a Squeaker -" "He was, if ever a child was," said my sister, most emphatically.

...

"Well, but I mean a four-footed Squeaker," said Mr. Pumblechook. "If you had been born such, would you have been here now? Not you -" "Unless in that form," said Mr. Wopsle, nodding towards the dish. (GE, pp. 57/58)

The self-complacency of adults and their tyrannical treatment of children are the characteristics which Dickens attacks in this passage. What is most irritating about it is the hidden suggestion of cannibalism that lies at the bottom of it. There is a lurking intimation that the company present, instead of talking about Pip as if he were a dish of meat, might all of a sudden actually start feeding on him, as they have done so mentally already. Cannibalism, however, is, according to Ronald Paulson, a frequent theme in satire. He writes:

The satirist uses cannibalism as a metaphor for aggression. (12)

(12) Ronald Paulson, The Fictions of Satire (Baltimore, Maryland, 1967), p. 9.

We have so far only dealt with mechanization, which, as I pointed out earlier in this chapter, plays a more important part in Dickens's satire than animation does. This does not mean, however, that animation may not be used for a satiric purpose. On the contrary, there are two occasions where Dickens launches attacks by way of animation:

For one thing, Dickens frequently animates objects in order to use them as indirect illustrations of the character to whom they belong. A good example for this is the description of Mr. Dombey's room:

Ugh! They were black, cold rooms; and seemed to be in mourning, like the inmates of the house. The books precisely matched as to size, and drawn up in line, like soldiers, looked in their cold, hard, slippery uniforms, as if they had but one idea among them, and that was a freezer. The bookcase, glazed and locked, repudiated all familiarities. Mr. Pitt, in bronze, on the top, with no trace of his celestial origin about him, guarded the unattainable treasure like an enchanted Moor. A dusty urn at each high corner, dug up from an ancient tomb, preached desolation and decay, as from two pulpits; and the chimney-glass, reflecting Mr. Dombey and his portrait at one blow, seemed fraught with melancholy meditations. (DS, p. 109)

As the chimney-glass in the text is said to reflect Mr. Dombey, so the whole room, as it is described in this passage, is a mirror-image of that character. This room is said to be cold, hard and uninviting, and its atmosphere is desolate and melancholy. The former are exactly the qualities that characterize the owner of this room, Mr. Dombey, and desolation and melancholy are the feelings that he consequently evokes in his surroundings, particularly so in his daughter Florence. Thus Dickens indirectly criticizes Mr. Dombey by alluding to him in terms of an environment that is animated in faithful imitation of its owner.

In a similar way, in Bleak House, the animation of the Dedlock-portraits at Chesney Wold (cf. p. 41) serves to point out and expose the inflexible rigidity of the living Dedlocks, who, as may be inferred from the analogy, are, in a metaphorical sense, more dead than their object-replica (as indeed their family-name suggests).

The other instance of animism serving as a satiric vehicle is Dickens's personification of a social or political institution that is characterized by the anonymity of its individual members. This is the case, for example, in the

following passage from A Tale of Two Cities, which tries to demonstrate the chaos and inevitable catastrophe that France had been manoeuvred into in the second half of the 18th century:

France, less favoured on the whole as to matters spiritual than her sister of the shield and trident, rolled with exceeding smoothness down the hill, making paper money and spending it. Under the guidance of her Christian pastors she entertained herself, besides, with such humane achievements as sentencing a youth to have his hands cut off, his tongue torn out with pincers, and his body burned alive, because he had not kneeled down in the rain to do honour to a dirty procession of monks which passed within his view, at a distance of some fifty or sixty yards. (TTC, p. 36)

"France" here is meant to stand for the French aristocracy, which, in complicity with the clergy, was mainly responsible for the disastrous situation the country had fallen into. What Dickens exposes here is the cruelty and inconsiderateness that characterized the attitude and the actions of that class. The crimes described and alluded to in this passage were, however, committed by a group rather than an individual, which means that the personality of the perpetrator was allowed to withdraw into anonymity, thus turning into a kind of abstract entity. With his personification and animation of "France", Dickens in turn identifies and makes concrete the guilty party, thus making them more vulnerable to the revenge that was realized in the later part of the novel.

Bleak House is another novel which attacks a social institution that brings misery upon mankind and shields its own representatives with the cloak of anonymity:

This is the Court of Chancery; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse, and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor, with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance; which gives to monied might the means abundantly of wearying out the right; which so exhausts finances, patience, courage, hope; so overthrows the brain and breaks the heart; that there is not an honorable man among its practitioners who would not give - who does not often give - the warning, "Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here." (BH, p. 51)

The passage points out the notion of elusiveness and irreality that marks the institution of the Court of Chancery, and contrasts it with the concrete misery it has brought upon its victims. The use of personification

demonstrates the undeniable causal relationship between the actions committed by this institution and the tragic consequences that result from them.

If we look at all the examples quoted above, we find that the undertone of Dickens's satirical animations and mechanizations varies according to the topic or vice exposed. Where he exposes mere human hypocrisy or vanity, the satire is light and playful, almost akin to pure humour in its delight in the absurd. On the other hand, evil resulting from deliberate meanness or wilful inconsideration is attacked with scathing satire. Dickens as a writer of satire is much more subjective than as a writer of humour, a distinction which is clearly reflected in his use of animation and mechanization. This is in keeping with the function of satire, which does not ridicule in order to entertain but to change and improve things and people. As Ronald Paulson points out:

The satiric image lacks the complete abstraction of the comic: a certain disgust, a certain physical involvement of the reader is always necessary. (13)

It is the chief aim of the satiric writer to provoke this response, this physical involvement in his reader, and he does so by means of this rhetorical skill.

Satire, "the art of persuasion" as David Worcester calls it, (14) is, after all, a traditional rhetorical mode of writing, falling under the scope of epideictic rhetoric. Now, as chapter 2.4 showed, animation and mechanization are effected through the use of metaphor, simile and metonymy, all of which are most powerful rhetorical devices. Consider, for example, the eloquence of a metaphor that calls Christopher Casby "an Inn signpost without an Inn" (cf. p. 85), or take as a similar example the description of Mr. Pecksniff:

Some people likened him to a direction-post, which is always telling the way to a place, and never goes there. (MC, p. 62)

(13) Paulson, p. 16.

(14) David Worcester, The Art of Satire (New York, 1940, 1968), p. 8.

In both cases the originality of the comparison and the economy of language are considerably more effective than a longwinded narrative statement might have been. This conciseness which characterizes this satirical technique reminds us of a cognate art, that is the art of caricature, which plays an important part in connection with the technique of animation and mechanization; we shall deal with this aspect in the following chapter.

Dickens's use of animation and mechanization thus frequently has a didactic purpose. Like such fable-writers as Aesop and La Fontaine, who resorted to the world of animals in order to expose deficiencies of human nature, Dickens made use of the world of inorganic matter to illustrate and criticize shortcomings in human nature and society.

3.3 Animation and Mechanization as Grotesque Elements

The last two chapters have shown how Dickens's use of animation and mechanization makes an important contribution to his humorous and his satiric mode of writing. In dealing with a device that animates insentient matter and mechanizes living beings, however, we must not fail to mention the grotesque. The vagueness of the term "grotesque" and its frequently arbitrary usage make it expedient to start this discussion with a brief study of the term itself.

As Wolfgang Kayser, one of the pioneers of modern studies in the grotesque, informs us, (15) the word "grotesque" has been adopted from art-historical terminology. The word was actually coined in Italy in the 16th century and it referred to a certain ornamental style that had been discovered in ancient Roman grottoes - hence the name - which were excavated at that time. The particular characteristic of this ornamental style consists in its combination of human and animal motifs with foliage and floral decoration. In other words, grotesque ornaments were not a truthful

(15) Kayser, pp. 20 f.

imitation and representation of natural life, but rather a collage of incongruous elements. Arthur Clayborough describes it as follows:

Without settled patterns or positive conventions, the new style of decoration is characterized by its rejection of the "natural conditions of organization" and the combining of heterogeneous forms. Natural physical wholes are disintegrated and the parts fantastically redistributed to suit the taste of the artist. (16)

But Kayser asserts that the originality of this style lay not only in its combination of animate and inanimate elements, but also in its apparent negation of natural law and order. He writes:

The term grottesco, which stands for a particular ornamental style derived from antiquity, contained, during the Renaissance, not only the notions of the playful and gay, of the lighthearted and imaginative, but had, at the same time, a touch of the oppressive and uncanny about it, as it depicted a world in which the rules of reality - such as the clear distinction between the realms of objects, plants, animals, and human beings, likewise the rules of statics, symmetry, and natural proportions - were invalidated. (17)

What strikes us particularly in this context is the appropriateness of the word "grotesque" in connection with the theme of animation and mechanization. Although the term has been taken out of its art-historical frame of reference and has undergone various shifts and extensions of meaning, in our context we still can relevantly apply the original meaning of the word, that is, the combination of animate and inanimate matter. This fact was appreciated by Walter Allen, when he wrote:

Smollett and Dickens create grotesques in the strict, original sense of the word, for the grotesque denotes the interweaving of human and animal forms. (18)

Kayser also informs us that in the 16th century the grotesque mural paintings frequently were referred to as "sogni dei pittori" ("dreams of the painters"), a term which reflects the similarity between the original "gro-

(16) Arthur Clayborough, The Grotesque in English Literature (Oxford, 1965), p. 3.

(17) Kayser, p. 22. (my translation)

(18) Walter Allen, "The Comedy of Dickens", in: Dickens 1970, ed. Michael Slater (London, 1970), p. 8.

tesque" representations and the mechanics of dream-work. As we will see later, this aspect of the grotesque, that is its dreamlike quality, is also inherent in Dickens's use of animation and mechanization.

It is somewhat more difficult to define the present meaning of the word "grotesque". It appears frequently in connection with the comic, the ridiculous, the absurd, the bizarre, or the macabre, and is very often used as a synonym for all these terms. For quite some time, but particularly in recent years, the grotesque has also become the subject of numerous theories and attempts at definition. (19) For the present purpose, however, I should like to go back to Ruskin's definition of the grotesque:

... it seems to me that the grotesque is, in almost all cases, composed of two elements, one ludicrous, the other fearful. (20)

According to this definition, a writer, by means of using the grotesque element, tries both to amuse and to terrify his readers. (21) Let us now consider how this is achieved in the case of Dickens's technique of animation and mechanization.

In the Tale of Two Cities, Dickens describes a scene in which young Jerry Cruncher, after having witnessed his father's activities as "resurrection-

(19) For a detailed study of these theories I refer the reader to Christian Thomsen's Das Groteske und die Englische Literatur (Darmstadt, 1977).

(20) John Ruskin, "Grotesque Renaissance", in: The Stones of Venice, III, ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1904), p. 151.

(21) The clash between these two elements, the ludicrous and the fearful, calls for an ambiguous emotional involvement of the reader with the text and challenges him to search for an interpretative understanding of it. This is, according to Ruskin, a characteristic of the grotesque: "A fine grotesque is the expression, in a moment, by a series of symbols thrown together in bold and fearless connection, of truths which it would have taken a long time to express in any verbal way, and of which the connection is left for the beholder to work out for himself; the gaps, left or overleaped by the haste of the imagination, forming the grotesque character." John Ruskin, "Of the Grotesque", in: Modern Painters, III, ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1904), p. 132.

man", that is, as a body snatcher, believes himself to be pursued by the exhumed coffin:

He had a strong idea that the coffin he had seen was running after him; and, pictured as hopping on behind him, bolt upright, upon its narrow end, always on the point of overtaking him and hopping on at his side - perhaps taking his arm - it was a pursuer to shun. It was an inconsistent and ubiquitous fiend too, for, while it was making the whole night behind him dreadful, he darted out into the roadway to avoid dark alleys, fearful of its coming hopping out of them like a dropsical boy's kite without tail and wings. It hid in doorways too, rubbing its horrible shoulders against doors, and drawing them up to its ears, as if it were laughing. It got into shadows on the road, and lay cunningly on its back to trip him up. All this time it was incessantly hopping on behind and gaining on him, so that when the boy got to his own door he had reason for being half dead. And even then it would not leave him, but followed him up-stairs with a bump on every stair, scrambled into bed with him, and bumped down, dead and heavy, on his breast when he fell asleep. (TTC, p. 192)

Although the incident takes place on a purely imaginative level, that is in Jerry Cruncher's fantasies, it is characteristically grotesque. What is comic (or ludicrous) about it is the idea of an animated box imitating the activities of a living being, that is we find here one of Bergson's axioms about humour in operation. On the other hand, however, the object in question is a coffin, and is thus associated closely with the notion of death; and the motif of man pursued by death reflects one of the most deep-rooted of human fears.

Although objects which display a resemblance to people or animals are basically comic (according to Bergson's definition), they become terrifying when they assume an independence of their own and threaten the order of the human world or even the lives of human beings; the result, then, is the creation of the grotesque. This double-sidedness of Dickens's animistic technique has already been pointed out by Dorothy van Ghent:

The animation of inanimate objects suggests both the quaint gaiety of a forbidden life and an aggressiveness that has got out of control. (22)

(22) van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's", p. 419.

Such is the case, for instance, with the train in Dombey and Son, which is first compared to a monster and in the end is actually shown tearing Carker's body limb from limb. We find another example in the opening passage of Bleak House, where the fog is animated, not on a merely playful level, but rather in terms of a creeping and all-devouring monster. This fearsome quality of an animated environment is also recognized by Dorothy van Ghent when she states:

In Dickens, [the] environment['s] ... animation is antagonistic, it fearfully intrudes upon the soul. (23)

Conversely, mechanization, that is the comparison between a person and an object is, as we have seen, a frequent source of humour; however, when it is mixed with a suggestion of the uncanny, it becomes grotesque. This is true, for instance, for all those numerous characters whom Dickens has equipped with wooden legs; some of these cases we have already discussed earlier (cf. pp. 58 f.); another example is to be found in Barnaby Rudge: Sim Tappertit, who, in the course of the Gordon Riots, has lost both his legs, of which he had been fetishistically proud, finally marries a widow with whom he has occasional disagreements of opinion:

In some of these gusts of bad weather, Mr. Tappertit would, in the assertion of his prerogative, so far forget himself, as to correct his lady with a brush, or boot, or shoe; while she (but only in extreme cases) would retaliate by taking off his legs, and leaving him exposed to the derision of those urchins who delight in mischief. (BR, p. 734)

The idea of removing members from the human body, as if they were parts of a machine or a mechanical toy, may strike us as funny; but we are at the same time disconcerted by the fact that these members have actually been amputated. The same uneasiness is felt by the reader when Dickens hypostatizes bodily parts of his characters, or their gestures or phrases (cf. chapter 2.2.2), apparently allowing them to lead a life of their own. Freud explains this uneasiness as follows:

Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, as in a fairy tale of Hauff's, feet which dance by themselves ... - all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when, as in the last instance, they prove capable of independent activity in

addition. As we already know, this kind of uncanniness springs from its proximity to the castration complex. (24)

What is furthermore uncanny or terrifying about the mechanized characters is the implication of their robot-like behaviour, that is, the suggestion that they have lost their souls and their human nature and have become dependent entirely on the laws of mechanics.

Of course, the comic and the frightening components are not always equally balanced in Dickens's use of animation and mechanization. Very frequently one of the two aspects dominates the over-all effect, while the other is present but in a less obtrusive way. In many cases, for example, where characters are mechanized, the comic element is distinctly predominant; indeed, these examples might be considered as purely humorous, were it not for the unfailing consistency with which the mechanizing aspect is repeated and stressed, thus giving those characters robot-like features. An excellent illustration of this is Mr. Dick in David Copperfield. He is certainly one of the most harmless and lovable characters in the novel, and his obsession with King Charles' head is fundamentally comic; nevertheless, the mechanic insistence with which this obsession is repeated whenever Mr. Dick appears on the scene has something strange and irritating about it; we sense here the stirring uneasiness, which we normally feel in the presence of madness, harmless though it may be. Indeed, I would suggest that it is the leitmotif-nature of a certain eccentric habit which turns humorous mechanization into the grotesque.

Similarly, animation of furniture, houses and crockery is primarily comic, and the imaginative turn of mind with which the poet detects a resemblance between these objects and human or animal features, evokes our amusement. However, where these objects reflect the traits and attitudes of their owners, we are again - in addition to being amused - slightly irritated by the suggestion of a metaphysically organic bond between objects and people; Dorothy van Ghent in fact describes it explicitly:

(24) Freud, "The Uncanny", p. 244.

Dickens's use of physical coincidence in his plots is consistent with his imagination of a thoroughly nervous universe, whose ganglia spread through things and people alike, so that moral contagion, from its breeding center in the human, transforms also the non-human and gives it the aptitude of the diabolic. (25)

On the other hand, it may be the fearsome element that predominates in a grotesque image, while the comic element has almost disappeared. In Oliver Twist, Fagin in his prison-cell muses about the men he has seen dying on the scaffold, and "how suddenly they changed, from strong and vigorous men to dangling heaps of clothes." (OT, p. 469) There is some trace of black humour or macabre ridicule left in the contrast between the strong and vigorous men and the dangling clothes; but on the whole the transmutation of man into object here has an uncanny, even a terrifying impact, due to the fact that the mechanization in this case takes place not on an imaginative, but on a real level and has been effected by death, the most unrelenting "mechanizer" of all. Likewise, most characters whose bodily limbs have been replaced by artificial substitutes, tend to be more haunting than amusing. As John Carey notes, "The fragmented vision results in both nightmare and farce." (26) and Dorothy van Ghent accurately observes: "The man with the wooden leg ... is ominous of something out of nature; he is death in life." (27)

It seems to me that wherever animation and mechanization take place on a realistic rather than on an imaginative level, the sinister element tends to dominate over the comic element, thus turning the "grotesque bouffon" into the "grotesque terrible", to borrow the two distinctions coined by Victor Hugo. This is in keeping with what Freud says in his essay about the uncanny:

(25) van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's", p. 428.

(26) Carey, p. 97.

(27) van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's", p. 421.

... an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality... (28)

Arthur Clayborough sees realism as one of the main contributors to the grotesque in Dickens:

It is precisely this underlying realism in Dickens's characters, ... which make so many of Dickens's characters grotesque. We see them in relation to a central standard. (29)

The grotesque is generally accepted to be the negation of the beautiful; it is, however, a richer source for artistic creativity than the latter, for, as Victor Hugo says, "le beau n'a qu'un type; le laid en a mille." (30) Particularly in his delineation of characters, Dickens focuses, if not on their ugliness, then on their oddness, mechanizing them through their eccentricities and resorting to exaggeration and distortion as one of his chief devices. In this respect his technique is strongly reminiscent of that of the caricaturist; indeed, in spite of George Gissing's vehement protest, (31) critics frequently tend to refer to Dickens's characters as caricatures. What Dickens's method of mechanization has in common with the technique of caricature is the fact that the whole attention is focused on a single idea or aspect, while in this way the complexity of human nature is ignored.

Thus H. Taine justly remarks:

Dickens fait l'hypocrisie si difforme et si énorme, que son hypocrite cesse de ressembler à un homme; on dirait une de ces figures fantastiques dont le nez est plus gros que le corps. (32)

(28) Freud, "The Uncanny", p. 244.

(29) Clayborough, p. 244.

(30) Victor Hugo, "Préface" à Cromwell (Paris, Nelson Editeurs, no year), p. 25.

(31) George Gissing, Charles Dickens. A Critical Study (London, 1904), p. 153.

(32) Taine, p. 34.

The limitation and one-sidedness of Dickens's approach has also been noted by Taylor Stoehr, who compares this narrative fixation of Dickens to the fixed course of the planetary system:

In each of these caricatures the major image is accompanied by a cluster of associated images, as a sun by its planets, and the attention is largely limited to the repeated orbitings within this system, a single image dominating the whole in intensity and centrality. (33)

As in caricature, the result is, of course, a kind of stylization or abstraction of one particular aspect; one might indeed say that Dickens's grotesque mechanization of characters represents a movement from the concrete to the abstract, a feature which has already been pointed out by Hillis Miller:

... we slowly come to realize, through our recognition of the repetition of obsessional phrase, modes of speech, or gesture, that the [grotesque] character exists as a kind of generalized form or abstract idea of himself. (34)

If we regard Dickens's novels from a diachronic point of view, we find that there is a change in Dickens's technique of caricature. Whereas in the early novels most of the characters - both heroes and villains - are ostensibly overdrawn, those in the later novels are much less obtrusive. To be sure, Dickens still mechanizes the characters in these later novels as he had done before, but he does so with a much more subtle and realistic approach. The characters in the early novels had been mechanized by exaggeration of their appearance and gestures, that is, by the author focusing our attention on their physical oddness or imperfection. Mr. Pickwick with his round belly, for example, or Squeers with his squinting eyes, or Quilp the dwarf, would thus be easily recognized in any illustration. The characters in the later novels are, in contrast, much more "normal" in their physical appearance; here it is mostly a fixation on a certain idea or attitude by which they are mechanized. Thus Mr. Dombey is characterized by his pride, the

(33) Stoehr, p. 22.

(34) Miller, Dickens: The World of his Novels, p. 88.

Marquis St. Evrémonde by his cruelty and Joe Gargery by his childlike nature. Michael Steig has made an interesting discovery in this context. He finds that this development of Dickens's caricature-technique is reflected also in the illustrations which Hablôt Browne made for these novels:

But there is clearly a radical change in Browne's style of character-portrayal between the novels from Pickwick through Barnaby Rudge, and those from Martin Chuzzlewit onwards, a change which almost seems to illustrate Dickens's distinction between caricature in the usual sense and "refined" and "elevated" caricature as practised by Leech, and which can further be seen to parallel Dickens's own development as a creator of grotesque characters. (35)

However, the villains in the later novels, though mechanized in a more "refined" way, are no less fearsome than the villains in the earlier novels; indeed they are even more frightening, for, as Steig accurately points out,

the decrease in outward distortion emphasizes their grotesque effect by taking these characters out of the realms of melodrama and the quasi-supernatural into a world closer to common reality, and hence more immediately threatening. (36)

This, of course, links up to what I said above, (cf. p. 99) namely that the grotesque, when enacted in front of a realistic background, becomes considerably more sinister and frightening than in a fantastic frame of reference.

In conclusion, I should like to point out that it is in Dickens's grotesque animations and mechanizations that we again become aware of their resemblance to a child's perception of the world. In this grotesque world, where laughter and fear are mingled and where the boundaries between comedy and nightmare, between reality and fantasy are blurred, even indistinguishable, we sense the author's childlike fascination and his personal subjective involvement with the animated matter and the mechanized characters of his own creation. Mark Spilka defines the grotesque in Dickens's work as

(35) Michael Steig, "Dickens, Hablôt Browne, and the Tradition of English Caricature", in: Criticism, vol. XI, No. 3 (Summer 1969), p. 222.

(36) Steig, p. 225.

an infantile perspective which reflects the terrors and absurdities of internal and external traps, and yet still allows for the play of conscious feeling. (37)

Spilka, by the way, finds in this "infantile perspective" a common feature between Dickens and Kafka.

If we connect Dickens's fascination with the uncanny effect of his animations and mechanizations with this "infantile perspective", this would seem to be a confirmation of what Freud said about the animistic phase in man's life:

It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive men, that none of us has passed through it without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as "uncanny" fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression. (38)

3.4 Animation and Mechanization as Symbolic Elements

The last part of this chapter on the literary function of animation and mechanization will deal with the symbolic significance, with which, particularly in the later Dickens novels, animistic and mechanistic images are filled. By describing them as symbolic, I simply mean that animation and mechanization, in addition to their humorous, satirical or grotesque qualities, may also serve as points of reference towards other elements of the novel, such as character, social or human features, or thematic motifs. The purely humorous effect of animism is of a more superficial order; the symbolic content, on the other hand, turns it into a structuring element.

(37) Mark Spilka, Dickens and Kafka, a Mutual Interpretation (London, 1963), p. 243.

(38) Freud, "The Uncanny", pp. 240/241.

Many instances of animation and mechanization in Dickens's novels are symbolic in one way or another; the symbolic impact, though, may vary in degree. There is least symbolism in the animation in those cases where objects in their physical outlook resemble their owners or are made to act like them. Such is the case, for example, with the house of the Meagles family (cf. p. 37), which in its individual parts is made to look like the individual members of that family. Another good example can be found in Gabriel Varden's beer mug:

There was also a goodly jug of well-browned clay, fashioned into the form of an old gentleman, not by any means unlike the locksmith, atop of whose bald head was a fine white froth answering to his wig, indicative, beyond dispute, of sparkling home brewed ale. (BR, p. 81)

This correspondence between Gabriel Varden's jug and himself is of a purely superficial, that is physical, nature; it contains no ethical or psychological implications. And yet, we may speak of a symbolic animation, since the object, in addition to being an ordinary jug, also serves as a direct reference to its owner. In other words, the resemblance is not accidental or arbitrary; it illustrates the relationship (of ownership) between the two.

The symbolic content in the animation is more pronounced in those cases where objects are made to express the psychological nature of their owners. The clock at Blimber's Hall, which inquires of Paul Dombey "How, does, my, lit,tle, friend", symbolizes Dr. Blimber, not on the strength of any physical resemblance, but rather by means of the mechanical and unwaveringly imperturbable nature that the two of them have in common.

Likewise, the Dedlock portraits which come to life in Bleak House are not merely animated on account of their naturalistic likeness to human beings; they also effectively point out the apparent deadness of the living Dedlocks, who, even during their lifetime, seem to have frozen into walking images of themselves.

Conversely, mechanization of characters becomes symbolic when the comparison between human beings and things is based on more than only a superficial likeness, that is when the tertium comparationis refers to a psycho-

logical characteristic of the character in question. Thus, Dora Spenlow's frailty - both physical and mental - is borne out by Miss Trotwood's frequent reference to her as "blossom", and the Murdstones' inflexible hardness is summed up in their mechanizing name. In fact, most mechanizing names in Dickens's novels are symbolically significant.

In the same way, the comparison of Mr. Dombey to wood expresses not only the stiffness of his body, but even more so that of his mind. It will not be surprising that most symbolic mechanizations are negative, since the comparison of a person to an object basically consists in the negation of the human (and therefore often humane) factor.

Symbolic significance must also be accorded to those instances where the natural elements such as wind, rain, and the sea are animated, since this device is usually applied in order to parallel or comment on human action and fate. On the evening when David Copperfield first takes Steerforth down to Yarmouth, David describes the wind as "sighing ... even more mournfully, than it had sighed and moaned upon the night when I first darkened Mr. Peggotty's door" and in Steerforth's ears "the sea roars as if it were hungry for us." (DC, p. 369) If we bear in mind that as a result of David's introduction of Steerforth to the Peggotty family that peaceful household will eventually be broken up for ever, we see that the animated elements, far from being a fortuitously melodramatic background setting, fulfil a function here which, on the whole, is not dissimilar to that of the chorus in the Greek tragedies. The "mournful sighing" of the wind is an appropriate comment on the ensuing catastrophe and the "hungry roaring" of the sea is of prophetic significance, as it points to the tempest scene later in the novel, where both Ham and Steerforth are drowned on the Yarmouth coast.

Similarly, the famous scene at the beginning of Martin Chuzzlewit, where Mr. Pecksniff is blown over in front of his house by a malicious gust of wind, has symbolic significance:

... the wind ... finding the back-door open, incontinently blew out the lighted candle held by Mr. Pecksniff, and slammed the front-door

against Mr. Pecksniff who was at that moment entering, with such violence, that in the twinkling of an eye he lay on his back at the bottom of the steps. (MC, p. 59)

Again, it is no arbitrary whim on the part of the narrator which induces him to use the wind here as an almost human-like agent; with the help of this animated gust of wind Mr. Pecksniff, with whom the reader has not yet become acquainted, is symbolically put in the place where he belongs: the hypocrite who, for once, is "kept down". As in the previous example from David Copperfield, the scene contains a prophetic element: it anticipates thematically Pecksniff's final fall (both in the literary and the figurative sense), brought about by old Martin Chuzzlewit.

Animism has an even stronger symbolic impact when it refers to one of the major themes of a novel. This is the case with the animated coffin in the Tale of Two Cities (cf. p. 96). Young Jerry Cruncher, watching his father stealing corpses from the cemetery, imagines one of the exhumed coffins to come alive and follow him home. The incident as such might be regarded as a demonstration of the lively and even grotesque turns of a child's imagination. There is more to it, however. The animation of the coffin relates to old Jerry Cruncher's illegal activity, which has, incidentally, brought him the nickname "resurrection man". And resurrection is one of the dominant topics of the novel, encompassing, on the one hand, the release of Dr. Manette from a twenty year imprisonment, and, on the other hand, Sidney Carton's heroic self-sacrifice, on which the narrator comments with the words from the gospel: "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord..." (TTC, p. 403)

In Dombey and Son, death figures as one of the major themes, and this theme is symbolically represented by the sea. If young Paul Dombey then claims to hear the waves speaking and wants to know what they are saying, this instance of animation is not merely the product of a child's overwrought imagination, but symbolically reveals Paul's deep sensitivity and receptiveness towards extra-sensory stimuli; as the sea has first been connected with the concept of death at Mrs. Dombey's death, and as the boy is equally inquisitive about his dead mother and the voices of the sea, we may infer from this that it is indeed his mother's voice that he hears in

the song of the waves. This symbolic connection is confirmed just before Paul's death, when, at the same time, he finally "sees" his mother and understands "what the waves are saying".

The strongest symbolic impact is achieved where animation and mechanization illustrate the main theme of a particular novel. Such is the case, for instance, in the oft quoted beginning of Bleak House:

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex Marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds. (BH, p. 49)

By means of the animated, ubiquitous fog, Dickens introduces the reader, geographically as well as figuratively, to the world of Bleak House. This dense fog enshrouds the town and the country alike, both of which will in turn become scenes for the action. But even more significantly, the fog stands symbolically for the Court of Chancery, that institution which alternately conceals and reveals existing relationships and links between the characters of the novel, and which impairs the sight and insight of those characters (exemplified most tragically in the case of Richard Carstone).

In the same way the comparison between people and wood plays a crucial part in Our Mutual Friend. In an elaborate, almost conceit-like manner and with the recurrence of a leitmotif, Dickens makes use of this particular mechanizing image. Silas Wegg, with his wooden leg, is literally and figuratively, visually and acoustically, a thoroughly wooden man:

Wegg was a knotty man, and a close-grained, with a face carved out of very hard material, that had just as much play of expression as a watchman's rattle. When he laughed, certain jerks occurred in it, and the rattle sprung. Sooth to say, he was so wooden a man that he seemed to have taken his wooden leg naturally, and rather suggested

to the fanciful observer, that he might be expected - if his development received no untimely check - to be completely set up with a pair of wooden legs in about six months. (OMF, p. 89)

The wood-metaphor reappears in connection with Twemlow, who, in keeping with his role as a precious exhibition piece at the Veneerings' parties, is described in terms of a wooden table (cf. p. 67). Indeed, the analogy is so perfect and consistent that only at the end of the passage does the reader realize that the description actually refers to a living human being.

The motif is repeated finally in Dickens's portrayal of Mrs. Podsnap, who, from the very beginning, is likened to a rocking-horse - an analogy which is picked up again almost every time that Mrs. Podsnap is referred to.

These three characters, although socially, morally, and functionally they perform different roles in the novel, have one common denominator: they all reflect aspects of the rigidity, even deadness of the society which serves as the primary target for Dickens's criticism in this novel. Thus, Hillis Miller refers to the Veneerings' mansion very appropriately as to a "house of death". (39) This theme of death intrudes into the novel again and again, even - paradoxically enough - by way of an animated environment:

The shrubs wrung their many hands, bemoaning that they had been over-persuaded by the sun to bud, the young leaves pined... (OMF, p. 144)

This deadness of society represents the thread that leads the reader through the novel, linking different levels of society and action to the labyrinthine plot. The theme of death is repeated in innumerable cases of mechanization, as for instance in the figure of Lady Tippins, about whom it is said that "you might scalp her, and peel her, and scrape her, and make two Lady Tippinses out of her, and yet not penetrate to the genuine article". (OMF, p. 169) The death-theme is most explicitly established in

(39) Miller, Charles Dickens. The World of his Novels, p. 316.

the name and person of Bradley Headstone (headstone = tombstone), the dull, robot-like schoolteacher.

As I mentioned at some earlier point (cf. p. 65), the novel has another recurrent theme: the image of the bird of prey. Like the wood-metaphor, it reappears throughout the novel in the manner of a leitmotif, thus establishing a relationship of analogy between characters of completely different social spheres, such as Gaffer Hexam and the Veneerings, who actually never meet in the novel. Gaffer Hexam, who "feeds" on the bodies of the drowned men that he fishes from the river, illustrates how closely the bird of prey motif is connected with the overall theme of the dead society in Our Mutual Friend: Humanity, according to this novel, basically consists of carrions and carrion-vultures.

I shall hereby conclude my study of the symbolic content of Dickens's animations and mechanizations. What I have tried to point out is, first, that animation and mechanization, in addition to their rhetorical function, may also fulfil a symbolic one, and secondly, how this symbolic impact may vary in degree, from the more superficial level of character-reference to the deeper level of a novel's actual theme and meaning.

IV ANIMATION AND MECHANIZATION AS EXPLICIT MESSAGES OF IMAGINATION

The use of animation and mechanization has been widely recognized as a characteristic feature of Dickens's writing. There has been a general tendency among critics, however, to treat this device as a more or less fortuitous by-product of Dickens's imagination and his creative energy, and to concentrate upon the humorous or grotesque effect produced by his animating and mechanizing metaphors. Only in more recent years have critics begun to recognize that Dickens actually made conscious use of animation and mechanization. This change of attitude among Dickens critics has been pointed out by Douglas Bush; (1) and J.R. Kincaid suggests that Dickens deliberately resorted to animism as a humorous device to deliver his contemporaries from the mechanic and mechanizing conditions of their time. (2)

Dickens certainly did use animation and mechanization to support his thematic issues, as we observed in the previous chapter on symbolism. What I should like to suggest, however, is that Dickens used the animistic device not merely in order to illustrate a certain mood or topical issue (as in Great Expectations, for example, where the animistic rising and falling of the mist reflects the rising and falling of Pip's expectations), but rather

- (1) "[Animation of objects] has long been recognized as a hallmark of Dickensian manner in ordinary and incidental description, and of late years it has been more and more recognized as a conscious symbolic device." Douglas Bush, "A Note on Dickens' Humour", in: From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, ed. Robert C. Rathburn & Martin Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis, 1958), p. 91.
- (2) "The long procession of mechanical humans and living things in Dickens suggests not only his typically Victorian position as revivifying artist, not only his vision of human beings fundamentally isolated from one another and from their environment, but also a use of laughter as a rhetorical tool to enlist his readers in a protest against isolation and mechanistic dominance and in support of imaginative sympathy and identification with others. Through his animism, Dickens continually uses laughter as a rhetorical support to thematic issues..." Kincaid, pp. 10/11.

that it came to be a theme in itself. In other words, animism for Dickens was not merely a pragmatic device used with the intention of achieving a certain effect, but became at times an end in itself, that is, a topic of primary relevance. (3)

At this point the question arises: what is there about animism that could make it a theme worth exploring in writing? The answer lies in the fact that an animistic vision is based upon the release of man's imaginative faculties, and imagination and the free exertion thereof represent one of those issues which we know to have been of primary importance to Dickens. (4) The animistic mind is not bound by the laws of nature and realism; it operates not on the grounds of science, but on the grounds of analogy, which, in turn, is based on the principles of similarity and contiguity (or on metaphor and metonymy, to use Jakobson's terminology). The person with an animistic mind perceives and experiences the world not by way of his knowledge (that is, his scientific knowledge of his environment), but by way of syntagmatic and paradigmatic association. In comparing objects to people and vice versa, he manages to overlook and ignore outstanding discrepancies (such as animate / inanimate, and differences in size, material, or texture) in favour of one slight analogy which would go by unnoticed by most other people. For the animistic mind a chair might easily resemble a human being, whereas a "normal" spectator would hardly detect any similarity in shape between the two, although he unconsciously testifies to that anatomical similarity by speaking of the "legs" of a chair or table. Likewise, we say about the windows of a house that they "look" in a certain direction, but only in an animistic view do these windows actually become eyes, and the whole façade a human face. (Our language is full of originally animistic metaphors which we have long ceased to recognize as such!)

- (3) The term "animism" refers here and in the following context not merely to the perception of life in inanimate matter, but rather to the attitude in general which enables a person to perceive animistically (and, by implication, mechanistically as well) as opposed to a rational and scientific approach to life.
- (4) Cf. for instance his "Preliminary Word" to *Household Words*, excerpts from which were quoted in my "Introduction". (pp. 18/19)

The animistically inclined person, furthermore, is capable of disregarding the laws of context and proportion by describing a whole person merely in terms of one characteristic physical or behavioural feature. Again, non-animistic people are startled by such a metonymic view, although they themselves may refer to common workers as "hands", without reflecting on their own metonymic use of language.

In short then, one could say that animism reflects a deviation from the normal rational view of the world. Our next step therefore would be to focus on that particular human mind that is capable of thus ignoring or disregarding the laws of rationality to enjoy complete freedom of imagination. Of all the various circumstances under which such an "emancipation" of the imagination might take place, I should like to single out four types of human beings who are inclined to experience the world in imaginative, and particularly in animistic, terms. They are the child, the madman, the dreamer and the artist (particularly the poet). For all of these it could be said that their perception is determined by direct sensuous stimuli to the exclusion of rational analysis.

The child, as Piaget and other psychologists in his wake have shown us, is capable of viewing the world animistically, because he has not yet been encumbered by the laws of natural science. He is guided in his judgment primarily by his sensory perceptions, which he orders by means of analogy and resemblance rather than by preconceived facts. As we know, a child's imagination is strong enough to endow inanimate objects such as dolls and teddy-bears with life, and the child consequently will treat them and speak with them as if they were human. In the process of growing up, he gradually learns to differentiate between animate and inanimate, between people and objects. As his knowledge increases, his perception and experience of the world change from the imaginative to the scientific or realistic side.

A person who grows up without undergoing this change, that is, who even as an adult is unable to distinguish between people and objects, behaves in an abnormal way; his unreflected retention of animistic vision thus appears as a symptom of mental disturbance or madness.

Under special conditions, however, even "normal" adults are capable of animistic experience. Such can be the case, for example, if a person has been subjected to heavy physical or psychological stress (or to drugs) and as a result experiences his sensory perceptions in a distorted way, a phenomenon which is generally known as hallucination.

A much more common situation, in which we all are exposed to animistic impulses, is when we dream. (As I pointed out in chapter I, p. 21, Freud in fact calls dream the source of the primitives' animistic Weltanschauung.) One of the reasons why dreams fascinate and irritate us is that in a dream things are not necessarily as they are in real life; that is, our natural command over the world of matter is suddenly invalidated.

The poet, finally, is wont to experience and describe the world in terms of sensuous perception and impressions rather than by means of his scientific or factual knowledge of it. Like a dreamer and a madman he freely trespasses upon the existing logical ordering of the world; (5) he may thus easily transgress the borders between animate and inanimate, endowing matter with life and turning people into effigies. Unlike the dreamer, he does so in a waking state, and unlike the madman, he is fully aware of the factual principles of reality and of the subjectivity of his own perception.

My selection of these four "representatives" of animistic vision is based on the fact that it is precisely through the minds and vision of these characters that Dickens illustrates and formulates his message of the essential importance of an animistic and thus imaginative approach to life.

- (5) A classical illustration of this is Dylan Thomas's poem "When all my five and country senses see", where the four senses of touch, hearing, taste, smell are described as having the power of "seeing", which is, of course, the fifth sense.

4.1 The Animistic Vision of the Child

It is a well-known fact that most of Dickens's novels deal with, and often even focus on, children. The recurrent theme of the child in distress, in which Dickens showed an almost obsessive interest, is commonly regarded as a direct result of his own childhood-experience as a factory-boy in Warren's blacking warehouse. Dickens was sent there at the age of twelve, on account of the reduced financial situation in which his father, John Dickens, found himself, and for which he served a term of four months in the Marshalsea debtors' prison. This, as we know from later statements made by the author, (6) left deep, traumatic marks upon young Charles Dickens. Although the impact of this experience may have been overrated by critics, who tend to make it responsible for all the gloom that pervades Dickens's novels, I believe that it is an essential factor in Dickens's preoccupation with the child and with the state of childhood. It seems that the intensity of that experience heightened the adult Dickens's insight and deepened his empathy with the mental and emotional world of a child, making him fully recognize the characteristic quality of a child's perception of his environment. "It would be difficult to overstate the intensity and accuracy of an intelligent child's observation," he wrote. (7) He was aware of the strong

- (6) In an autobiographical fragment conveyed to John Forster, he wrote: "No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these every day associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life." Forster, p. 25.
- (7) Quoted from J.C. Reid, The Hidden World of Charles Dickens (University of Auckland, 1962), p. 13.

degree to which a child's vision is governed by his imagination, and he knew, therefore, the important part played by the interweaving of the animate and the inanimate worlds in that imagination. It is not surprising, then, to find that all of the child-protagonists in his novels regard the world through animistic eyes.

The first of these child-protagonists is Oliver Twist. As he spends his early childhood under unfavourable conditions and in a more than hostile world, it is natural that he regards even the objects around him as adverse and dangerous; and by animating them (in his imagination) he places them on the same line with the inimical world of the adults around him. Thus, the undertaker's shop, in which he has to sleep, turns into a ghostly, haunted place:

An unfinished coffin on black trestles, which stood in the middle of the shop, looked so gloomy and death-like that a cold tremble came over him, every time his eyes wandered in the direction of the dismal object, from which he almost expected to see some frightful form slowly rear its head, to drive him mad with terror. Against the wall were ranged, in regular array, a long row of elm boards cut into the same shape: looking in the dim light, like high-shouldered ghosts with their hands in their breeches-pockets. (OT, p. 75)

While Oliver is not afraid of his own death, (8) those objects connected with the death of other people are just as threatening to him as these people themselves during their lifetime. His fear is of the living, and if he animates, that is, gives life to objects, he classifies them as equally as threatening as the human beings he has known so far.

This changes from the moment that Oliver is taken into Mr. Brownlow's house, where all the people treat him with kindness and benevolence. This atmosphere of friendliness is, in Oliver's mind, extended to the environment; the animation of objects now serves to intensify the sympathy ex-

- (8) "... he wished, as he crept into his narrow bed, that that were his coffin, and that he could be lain in a calm and lasting sleep in the churchyard ground, with the tall grass waving gently above his head, and the sound of the old deep bell to soothe him in his sleep." (OT, p. 75)

pressed by his environment, and there is one object in particular which is so full of sympathy and kindness that it comes alive in Oliver's eyes: the portrait of his mother:

"It makes my heart beat," added Oliver in a low voice, "as if it was alive, and wanted to speak to me, but couldn't." (OT, p. 129)

Oliver's world of animated objects thus functions as a mirror which, at any given time, reflects the adverse as well as the favourable circumstances prevailing in his life. By means of animation, Oliver projects the state of his soul onto his environment, a habit which even among adults is fairly common, and indeed basically human; this is explicitly commented on by Dickens in that novel:

Such is the influence which the condition of our own thoughts, exercises, even over the appearance of external objects. (OT, p. 307)

In Dombey and Son we come across another imaginative child-character. Although Paul Dombey is not the true protagonist of the novel - his life is too short for that - he occupies a protagonist-like position within that part of the book that covers his life. This means that Dickens gives us a profound insight not only into Paul's external situation and adventures, but also into his interior, that is, his mental state and development. As we have already had the opportunity of noticing, Paul has a lively imagination, a fact which is borne out by his constant animations of his environment. Unlike *Oliver Twist*, however, whose animations reflect the changing acts of providence, Paul Dombey's animations prove to be a counterweight to the money- and knowledge-ridden world in which he is growing up. In contrast to his father, he is described as a "wondering Dombey" (DS, p. 149) (9) and has gained a reputation for being an old-fashioned or precocious child. His discussion with his father about money makes the contrast between the two mentalities most evident. While Dombey senior defines money simply as "Gold, and silver, and copper. Guineas, shillings, half-pence" (DS, p. 152) and glorifies the omnipotence of these, Paul immediately pictures money

(9) Cf. in this context also p. 144, where the importance of the ability to wonder is discussed.

animistically as a kind of genie - he asks his father "What can [money] do?", (not "What can you do with money?") - and expresses his doubts about the omnipotence as well as the beneficence of it:

Why didn't money save me my Mama? ... It isn't cruel, is it? (DS, p. 153)

At Dr. Blimber's school, where knowledge is reduced to the driest and most suffocating of all matters, Paul's animistic vision provides an outlet for his suppressed imagination:

He loved to be alone, and in those short intervals when he was not occupied with his books, liked nothing so well as wandering about the house by himself, or sitting on the stairs, listening to the great clock in the hall. He was intimate with all the paperhanging in the house; saw things that no one else saw in the patterns; found out miniature tigers and lions running up the bedroom walls, and squinting faces leering in the squares and diamonds of the floor-cloth. (DS, p. 234)

The great clock in the hall, as we have seen earlier, (cf. p. 43) is, in Paul's mind, animistically converted into a double of Dr. Blimber. This and the "miniature tigers and lions", as well as the "squinting faces" preserve Paul from lapsing into the unimaginative and mechanical mentality which is bred at Dr. Blimber's and cultivated in the business world of Mr. Dombey. Paul's animistic vision thus becomes the exponent of his "otherness", his "old-fashionedness", as it is termed in the novel, which reaches an almost mystic dimension in those scenes where Paul listens to the voices he hears in the rolling waves of the sea, the sea which in that novel symbolically stands for death and, implicitly, for Paul's deceased mother.

The protagonist of Dickens's next novel, David Copperfield, is - for the first part of the novel, at least - once more a child who views the world through animistic eyes. He does so out of a deeply analogical mind, which seeks and finds in almost any object a resemblance to one of the other characters of the novel. This goes back to David's early childhood, as the following example illustrates:

There was a red velvet footstool in the best parlour, on which my mother had painted a nosegay. The ground-work of that stool, and

Peggotty's complexion appeared to me to be one and the same thing. The stool was smooth, and Peggotty's was rough, but that made no difference. (DC, p. 66)

In the same manner, almost every object in David's world finds a counterpart among the people of his acquaintance. The analogy is particularly strong where objects (or animals), by way of proprietorship, are connected with certain characters. Mr. Murdstone has a great dog, "deep-mouthed and black-haired like Him" (DC, p. 93), Miss Murdstone brings with her "two uncompromising hard black boxes" and "a very jail of a bag which ... shut up like a bite" (DC, p. 97), Uriah Heep's watch is "pale, inexpressive-faced" (DC, p. 292), and at Miss Trotwood's house there is a particular stool in a particular corner, which is usually occupied by Mr. Dick and "which was called "Dick", after him" (DC, p. 310). David's world thus is marked by a strong sense of interdependence between things and people in the sense that his object world is an exact mirror image of the human world. Significant in this respect is the scene where David, after his arrival at Salem school, tries to visualize, from their carved signatures, his future fellow-pupils and their reactions to the pasteboard placard with the inscription "Take care of him. He bites." which he is compelled to carry on his back:

There was an old door in this playground, on which the boys had a custom of carving their names. It was completely covered with such inscriptions. In my dread of the end of vacation and their coming back, I could not read a boy's name, without inquiring in what tone and with what emphasis he would read, "Take care of him. He bites." There was one boy - a certain J. Steerforth - who cut his name very deep and very often, who, I conceived, would read it in a rather strong voice, and afterwards pull my hair. There was another boy, one Tommy Traddles, who I dreaded would make game of it, and pretend to be dreadfully frightened of me. There was a third, George Dimple, who I fancied would sing it. I have looked, a little shrinking creature, at that door, until the owners of all the names - there were five-and-forty of them in the school then, Mr. Mell said - seemed to send me to Coventry by general acclamation, and to cry out, each in his own way, "Take care of him. He bites." (DC, p. 131)

This passage is significant because it points towards the parallel that exists between animism and literature. If David (by means of his imagination), after having deciphered the names on the door, tries to fill them with life and expression by conjuring up for every name a corresponding character,

this is at the same time a process of animation and an act of literary interpretation. This reminds us of the fact that David is not only the young protagonist of the story, but also its narrator, and a writer by profession, that is a man who is professionally (or vocationally) occupied with the animation of the written word. (10)

There is a very similar scene at the beginning of Great Expectations, where Pip, another child-protagonist, contemplates the tombstones on the graves of his parents and his little brothers, and derives specific ideas about their appearance from the inscriptions on their tombstones. (The passage was quoted on p. 45). The parallel between these two instances of what we might call "literary animation" is intensified by the fact that Pip, like David, is the narrator of his own story. There exists then a definite relationship between animation and literature, a point which will be dealt with in greater detail in chapters 4.3 and 4.4.

4.2 The Animistic Vision of the Madman

So far we have seen how Dickens's child-characters, true to their own conception of the world, act as animators. While there is an abundance of childish animation in his work - due to the fact that so many of his novels concentrate on children - there is less material with respect to the imagination of mentally disturbed characters. Not that there were too few mad people in his novels, on the contrary. But in a majority of these cases, madness is presented merely for the sake of its odd or grotesque effect and rarely with the intention of giving a relevant insight into the mind of a mad character.

- (10) It is interesting to notice how in this passage the two meanings of "character", that is "letter" on the one hand, and "person" on the other, come together and almost reach the point of interchangeability.

One of those rare insights is given to us in one of the interpolated tales in the Pickwick Papers, which is aptly entitled "A Madman's Manuscript". As the title suggests, a madman narrates the story of his mental derangement. What is important in our context is the fact that he mentions animistic perception among the symptoms of his illness, that is the ability to see shapes and hear voices in an otherwise inanimate environment:

Large dusky forms with sly and jeering faces crouched in the corners of the room, and bent over my bed at night, tempting me to madness. They told me in low whispers, that the floor of the old house in which my father's father died, was stained with his own blood, shed by his own hand in raging madness. I drove my fingers into my ears, but they screamed into my head till the room rang with it..." (PP, p. 220)

In Bleak House we encounter, in Miss Flite, a little mad woman who, though not of central importance, plays more than a purely marginal role. She is one of those hopeless cases who got caught in the wheels of Chancery and was never released again (as will happen to Richard Carstone in time), her madness being a result of this trial. Her most notable property is a cage full of imprisoned birds on whom she has bestowed such high-flying names as "Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin, Despair, Madness, Death, Cunning, Folly, [etc.]" (BH, p. 233), and it is her intention to release these birds on the day that Chancery passes its judgment on her case. The names are, of course, important as they refer to the spiritual losses and "gains" Miss Flite has experienced through Chancery. In calling these birds by allegorical names, Miss Flite attempts to animate those ideas and concepts, that is, she furnishes them with the form and substance of living beings, thus trying to give them concrete forms.

It is an interesting feature that murderers in Dickens's novels, after having committed the deed, frequently experience mental derangement, suffering from hallucinations and persecution-mania. Animism plays an important part in this context. Bill Sikes, after the murder of Nancy, believes himself to be followed by the dead woman, projecting her image onto the silent landscape:

Every object before him, substance or shadow, still or moving, took the semblance of some fearful thing; but these fears were nothing

compared to the sense that haunted him of that morning's ghastly figure following at his heels. He could trace its shadow in the gloom, supply the smallest item of the outline, and note how stiff and solemn it seemed to stalk along. He could hear its garment rustling in the leaves and every breath of wind came laden with that last low cry. If he stopped, it did the same. If he ran, it followed - not running too: that would have been a relief: but like a corpse endowed with the mere machinery of life, and borne on the slow melancholy wind that never rose or fell. (OT, p. 428)

In a similar way, Jonas Chuzzlewit, after his murder of Montague Tigg, believes he hears the cry of "Murder!" proclaimed by every member of the animate as well as the inanimate world:

Hark! It came on, roaring like a sea! Hawkers burst into the street, crying it up and down; windows were thrown open that the inhabitants might hear it; people stopped to listen in the road and on the pavement; the bells, the same bells began to ring: tumbling over one another in a dance of boisterous joy at the discovery (that was the sound they had in his distempered thoughts), and making their airy playground rock.

...

The sounding street repeated Murder; barbarous and dreadful Murder; Murder, Murder, Murder. Rolling on from house to house, and echoing from stone to stone, until the voices died away into the distant hum, which seemed to mutter the same word! (MC, p. 866)

Both Bill Sikes and Jonas Chuzzlewit have obviously lost control of their senses and perceptions. The animistic hallucinations they experience are full of demonic expression. Their imagination, set free by their awareness of guilt, has got the better of them and is turning against them now. The use of animism is a hauntingly effective element in these scenes; it greatly contributes to the psychologically convincing portrayal of a murderer's psyche. Thus Barbara Hardy writes, with respect to Jonas Chuzzlewit:

Jonas's story is a well-handled exercise in the manner of Poe: a study in the psychology of guilt, fear, and the perverse imp that tempts to self-exposure. (11)

(11) Barbara Hardy, The Moral Art of Dickens (London, 1970), pp. 113/114.

Animism in its relationship to mental derangement is, however, most deeply explored in Barnaby Rudge. Barnaby, we are told, has been radically different from other children since his early infancy: he is described in retrospect as unchildlike, cunning, (12) and old and elfin-like in face. In this respect he might be called a predecessor to Paul Dombey. (cf. p. 116) While considered unchildlike on account of his early shrewdness, there is nevertheless one typical child-like quality which Barnaby possesses and retains even as an adult; namely an extremely strong animistic disposition:

... the strange imaginings he had; this terror of certain senseless things - familiar objects he endowed with life ... (BR, p. 250)

For Barnaby, as for a child, the material world is permeated with life and action, a world not controlled by human rationality and order, but independent and of mischievous and goblin-like power. A cloud of smoke appears to him as a group of people in a hurry, "treading closely on each other's heels", and "catching to each other's skirts" (BR, p. 136), and a line full of clothes turns into a secret court of plotters:

"Look down there", he said softly; "do you mark how they whisper in each other's ears; then dance and leap, to make believe they are in sport? Do you see how they stop for a moment, when they think there is no one looking, and mutter among themselves again; and then how they roll and gambol, delighted with the mischief they've been plotting? Look at 'em now. See how they whirl and plunge. And now they stop again, and whisper, cautiously together - little thinking, mind, how often I have lain upon the grass and watched them. I say - what is it that they plot and hatch? Do you know?"

"They are only clothes", returned the guest, "such as we wear; hanging on those lines to dry, and fluttering in the wind!" (BR, p. 133)

As the passage shows, people try to correct Barnaby in his animistic vision by means of realistic explanations. It is indeed his animism which most frequently provokes other people's comments about his madness. His mother calls it "his other childness" (BR, p. 250), a phrase which expresses both her love for him and her awareness of the importance which animism plays in childhood.

- (12) In connection with the character of Barnaby, the word "cunning" here is devoid of any negative implications, but rather has the meaning of "shrewd" or "knowing".

Other characters are not so amiable in their judgment of Barnaby's predicament; perhaps the most remarkable criticism is uttered by John Willet, the landlord of the Maypole Inn, who is dullness in person. He says of Barnaby that "he wants imagination" (BR, p. 133), a statement, which - though reflecting a common attitude of people towards Barnaby - is at the same time highly ironic; for Barnaby in his animistic madness possesses a hundred times more imagination than John Willet. And indeed, the novel makes clear that in many respects the mad (and thus the animistic) person leads a much richer existence than a normal person. Barnaby himself expresses this most accurately when he declares:

Why, how much better to be silly, than as wise as you! You don't see shadowy people there, like those that live in sleep - not you. Nor eyes in the knotted panes of glass, nor swift ghosts when it blows hard, nor do you hear voices in the air, nor see men stalking in the sky - not you! I lead a merrier life than you, with all your cleverness. You're the dull men. We're the bright ones. Ha! ha! I'll not change with you, clever as you are, - not I! (BR, p. 133)

This could be called a key-passage in the novel, because on the one hand it is the only place where Barnaby expresses his own view about his "predicament", and on the other it is an explicit comment on the importance of animism as an expression of imaginative and spiritual freedom. And if we accept freedom of imagination as of real value, then Barnaby's argument is thoroughly convincing and his claim to lead "a merrier life" seems irrefutable; we sense here a confirmation of the old saw that children and fools tell the truth.

Another point ought to be mentioned here: Barnaby is not only a very imaginative but also an essentially positive character, as the novel as a whole makes clear. This is important, as it illustrates a Dickensian law; namely the fact that in Dickens's novels, richness of imagination is inseparably linked with moral goodness. In other words, the character who - by his own free will (cf. p. 121) - partakes of animistic vision, is also essentially capable of love and charity. This, however, is a thesis that will be dealt with at greater length in chapter 4.4.

4.3 The Animistic Vision of the Dreamer

Animism as an approach to life is freely practised by children but rarely ever indulged in by adults. However, when a child grows up, he does not lose his animistic potential; instead he suppresses it for the sake of a more scientific and rational attitude towards life. Since Freud we know, however, that all our suppressed (or repressed) impulses have the tendency to reappear occasionally in our minds. This is most frequently the case while we are dreaming. It will therefore not surprise us to find that Dickens made ample use of animism in his attempt to represent a dreamer's state of mind. Thus we find that in his novels animism is frequently experienced by dreamers.

One famous example has already been mentioned earlier (cf. p. 68). It is the case of Tom Smart, hero of "The Bagman's Story" (an interpolated tale in the Pickwick Papers): Tom, who is staying at a road-sign inn, falls asleep in his bed but wakes up shortly afterwards to find himself in a strange state between sleep and waking in which he witnesses the curious transformation of a mahagony chair into an old gentleman constantly winking and leering at him. They enter into a conversation, in the course of which the superficial analogy between chairs and human beings serves as the basis for a good piece of humorous double-talk. The following is just one illustration, though possibly the most intriguing of them all:

"I have been a great favourite among the women in my time, Tom", said the profligate old debauchee; "hundreds of fine women have sat in my lap for hours together. What do you think of that, you dog, eh!" The old gentleman was proceeding to recount some other exploits of his youth, when he was seized with such a violent fit of creaking that he was unable to proceed. (PP, p. 266)

After this metaphoric conversation the old gentleman changes back into a chair, leaving Tom unable to decide whether the whole scene had been a mere dream or not.

What this episode both amusingly and shrewdly reveals is the importance of external stimuli for the dreaming or half-dreaming person. We all know from

our own experience how, on the threshold of falling asleep, we are acutely aware of sensory stimuli and at the same time intent on arranging them into a pattern built on the principle of analogy. We tend to discover all kinds of shapes and figures in the pattern of a wallpaper, for instance (just as Paul Dombey did at Dr. Blimber's school [cf. p. 117]). This is the stage when imagination takes over from reason, when the things we perceive are interpreted on the basis of association rather than by means of rational thinking. Dickens gives a very vivid description of this state, one that is both poetic and perceptive, in his Christmas-story "The Chimes":

Black are the brooding clouds and troubled the deep waters, when the Sea of Thought, first heaving from a calm, gives up its Dead. Monsters uncouth and wild, arise in premature, imperfect resurrection; the several parts and shapes of different things are joined and mixed by chance; and when, and how, and by what wonderful degree, each separates from each, and every sense and object of the mind resumes its usual form and lives again, no man - though every man is every day the casket of this type of the Great Mystery - can tell. ("Ch", pp. 200/201)

The protagonist of this story, Toby Veck (who also goes under the nickname of "Trotty"), manifests, even in his waking state, a disposition to animistic behaviour; in particular he finds himself personally addressed by the singing churchbells, hearing them sing:

Toby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart, Toby!
Toby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart, Toby.
("Ch", pp. 161/162) (13)

Late on New Year's eve, Toby follows the bells' invitation ("Toby Veck, Toby Veck, waiting for you Toby! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, waiting for you Toby! Come and see us, come and see us..."), ("Ch", p. 196) and climbs up the church-belfry. There he falls into a deep dream which starts with the bells' transformation into human shapes:

- (13) This is one of the passages which strongly reveal Dickens's indebtedness to fairy tales; the story of Toby Veck and the Chimes was clearly modelled on the story of Dick Whittingdon, which also influenced other Dickens narrations. The present instance of animation is, by the way, one of the rarer cases where animation takes place on the acoustic rather than on the visual level.

Then and not before, did Trotty see in every Bell a bearded figure of the bulk and stature of the Bell - incomprehensibly, a figure and the Bell itself. Gigantic, grave, and darkly watchful of him, as he stood rooted to the ground. ("Ch", p. 203)

In the course of this dream Toby travels in time, as Scrooge does in Dickens's more famous "Christmas Carol". As in Scrooge's case, these dream-episodes are of a prophetic-didactic nature, designed to teach Toby a lesson of charity. What is important in our context is the fact that the whole dream both originates with, and is dominated by, the animated bells which, in a psychological interpretation, might be said to represent Toby Veck's conscience.

Animation here serves a double function: it firstly creates the dream-perspective for Toby Veck, and secondly represents the means by which the didactic lesson is delivered; thus it constitutes both the medium and the message of the dream.

An important aspect of this dream-episode is the fact that it may be seen as a paradigm for the whole of Dickens's literary work. For as Toby Veck is lulled into dream by means of an animated setting, the reader is led into an imaginary world by means of Dickens's literary writing. And just as Toby Veck's animistic dream-images embody the particular lesson he has to learn, so do Dickens's novels - most of which are centred on some moral issue - serve as a vehicle for a didactic lesson. Animism thus fulfils the same function in Toby Veck's dream as Dickens's use of literature with respect to his readers - a relationship which, as we shall see in our next chapter, does not only appear in "The Chimes", but throughout Dickens's work, and which serves as a vehicle for his poetic message.

The analogy between Toby Veck's dream and Dickens's work as a whole is intensified through the fact that most of Dickens's novels, in some way or another, have a dream-like quality about them, that is, they sometimes strike us as dream sequences rather than as imitations of real life. In short, it seems at times as if the narrator were following the laws of dream mechanisms rather than those of ordinary (that is rational and logical) story-telling. This is a point that was singled out by Taylor Stoehr, who

made it the topic of his extensive study The Dreamer's Stance. According to Stoehr, the reality in Dickens's novels is analogous to that of a dream and he enlarges on his thesis as follows:

The correspondences which allow the analogy to be drawn at all are both so full and so precise that one is tempted to suggest that novel-writing may have amounted for Dickens to the same sort of activity that other men engage in when they recount their dreams. (14)

Without intending to sum up the whole of Stoehr's study, I shall nevertheless deal with some points which seem to me interesting and essential in connection with animism.

One of the points Stoehr stresses in his study is the unreal and dreamlike vision which governs Dickens's novels, recognizing animism as one of the main elements contributing to it:

... the peculiar life and meaning with which ... objects are infused gives everything a dreamlike cast. (15)

By means of being closely interwoven with otherwise realistic and normal settings and contexts, animism becomes more unrealistic, surrealistic, even nightmarish than if it were embedded in a completely fantastic story (cf. p. 99). Stoehr describes this vision as a "madness of reality". (16)

Another correspondence Stoehr finds between Dickens's novels and the mechanism of dreams is the fact that Dickens's descriptions - or hallucinations, as he calls them - are, like the images in a dream, predominantly visual. It is important in this context to point out that by far the greatest majority of Dickens's animations and mechanizations are mediated on the visual level, as a result of which I have frequently referred to animistic perception as animistic "vision".

(14) Stoehr, p. 66.

(15) Stoehr, pp. 55/56.

(16) Stoehr, pp. 57/58.

As we saw in the second chapter, Dickens's transpositions between the animate and the inanimate world are effected rhetorically by means of metaphors and metonymies. Stoehr refers to these two devices as part of Dickens's "dream rhetoric". He explains this as follows:

As Dickens uses them, metonymy and metaphor are primarily devices of displacement and condensation, and they operate in much the same way as those distorting mechanisms by which dream meanings are simultaneously concealed and revealed. (17)

Stoehr mentions as an example of metonymy the famous nose of the Marquis St. Evrémonde in A Tale of Two Cities, to which Dickens devotes a great deal of attention. The narrator's concentration on the marquis' nose represents, on the one hand, a form of displacement; on the other hand, the metonymy creates a focusing and thereby revealing effect in that the whole character is summed up in this nose, with its sneer of cruelty and contempt. This reduction of a character to one particular part of his face or body, or more abstractly, to a favourite gesture or phrase of his, or even to his name, is a phenomenon of Dickens's style that we dealt with in connection with the concept of mechanization (cf. chapter 2.2.2). The above example is also one in which Stoehr recognizes an analogy to "dream rhetoric". He writes:

... the metonymic shrinking of a character into his own name is a condensation, and has the typical function of condensation, namely to conceal and reveal, as it were, in the same breath. (18)

Similarly, Stoehr continues, Dickens's metaphors both disguise and reveal at the same time by means of the condensation and identification of the metaphoric elements. On the one hand, he claims, Dickensian metaphors have, unlike ordinary metaphors, a typically narrowing, condensing effect on the meaning; because of their lack of comparative and contrastive force he even calls them "dead" metaphors. On the other hand, as he points out, a dead metaphor, revived, is always more revealing than other, more comparative metaphors.

(17) Stoehr, p. 77.

(18) Stoehr, pp. 78/79.

The telling of a dream, Stoehr suggests, is at the same time an attempt (on the narrator's part) to control and possess the dream instead of being controlled and possessed by it. It arises out of the dreamer's wish to avoid committing himself and to remain detached. Stoehr sees this same insistence on detachment and non-committal in Dickens as a writer

... who finds himself presented with the world he writes down, as if it were not his world, nor his imagination that created it. (19)

He sees in this detachment a major characteristic of Dickens's narrative stance, an observation that had already been made before by Hillis Miller with respect to the opening paragraph of Bleak House. (20) Dickens's focus on the physical setting is also taken as a symptom of his intentional detachment, for, as Stoehr argues, this is the world - the world of objects and things - which "always absorbs the attention of the detached observer". (21) And this takes us once more to the theme of animation and mechanization, for, as Stoehr writes:

When the tendency is carried to the extreme, as it is in Dickens, the characters themselves are viewed as objects rather than as people, while the affective life thus squeezed out of the characters turns up in the scene itself, producing the pervasive animism we find throughout in Dickens. (22)

Here then is a convincing parallel between an animistic narrator and a dreamer. Dickens's vision, which deals with the familiar detail rather than with the unfamiliar complex and which dwells equally long and more lovingly on an insignificant object than on a significant figure, has, as we find, very much in common with the vision of a dreamer:

The fragmentation of perception and the displacement of feeling to the isolated inanimate parts has a levelling effect, so that everything is somehow of equal emotional weight; thus, as in dream or magic, the smallest irrelevancy has talismanic force. (23)

(19) Stoehr, p. 88.

(20) Miller, Dickens. The World of his Novels, pp. 225/226.

(21) Stoehr, p. 85.

(22) Stoehr, p. 88.

(23) Stoehr, p. 88.

The dreamer's predilection for detail and the magic quality of dreams are features that we have already encountered in the dreams of Tom Smart and Toby Veck; in both cases these features are manifested through the medium of animism. This shows that Dickens had enough insight into the dreamer's stance to reproduce a dreamlike vision on the lines of dream mechanism for one of his characters. On the other hand, Stoehr seems to suggest in his study that Dickens himself wrote his novels under the spell or dictation of impulses similar to dream-work. If we accept this theory and if at the same time we bear Dickens's skilful manipulation of dream-episodes in mind, it would appear that Dickens stood simultaneously inside and outside of the dreamer's world.

Let me give an illustration of this rather complex situation: It sometimes happens that while a person is asleep and dreaming, he suddenly realizes that he is in fact dreaming. If he then tries to get the better of his dream by controlling it, the spell is usually broken and he awakens to full consciousness. If, however, he allows himself to drift along with his dream on the level of his subconscious (or semi-conscious) mind, he may be able both to influence and expand his dream. He may wish to introduce certain things into his dream, and, like an obedient producer, his subconscious mind will stage the particular scene, or depart from it to other points of association. This is perhaps the most intensive dream-experience one can have, as the experience takes place at the same time as the awareness of it.

In the same way, Dickens seems to have been both subjectively and objectively involved with dream-work. He knew the world of imagination and dreams from experience as well as from observation, and he demonstrated this knowledge in his use of animism in his novels. His inspirations for his novels came, according to George Henry Lewes, sensuously perceptibly to him:

Dickens once declared to me [Lewes] that every word said by his characters was distinctly heard by him. (24)

(24) Quoted from Forster, p. 785.

Similarly, John Forster quotes from a letter in which Dickens recognized his vocation as a writer from the fact that

"... when, in the midst of this trouble and pain, I sit down to my book, some beneficent power shows it all to me, and tempts me to be interested, and I don't invent it - really do not - but see it, and write it down..." (25)

This statement of Dickens is of two-fold interest. On the one hand it shows us a dreamer who objectively observed himself dreaming. At the same time it reveals to us an artist who observed himself in the process of creating art. This takes us to the topic of our next chapter, which deals with the connection that exists in Dickens's novels between animism on the one hand and artistic imagination on the other.

4.4 The Animistic Vision of the Poet

Next to the child, the madman and the dreamer we finally find another "specialist" for animistic vision in the figure of the poet. As in the former cases, here, too, we are dealing with a mind untrameled by any rational or conventional restrictions; for the poet conceives his understanding of the world from the principle of analogy, based on the grounds of similarity and contiguity. Metaphor and metonymy, after all, are among his principal rhetorical tools. What I should like to suggest and prove in the course of this chapter is the thesis that in his work Dickens explicitly connects the use of animism with the notion of art in general and with literature in particular, thus demonstrating his belief that only an animistically inclined person is capable of both artistic creativity and artistic appreciation.

In Sam Weller we come (chronologically speaking) across the first poetic mind in Dickens's novels. For him the animate world stands in constant interaction with the inanimate world, and he is capable of perceiving and

(25) Forster, pp. 786/787.

defining the one in terms of the other. This is revealed clearly in the very first instance when Sam is introduced to the reader at the White Hart Hotel; true to his occupation as a boot-cleaner, he speaks about the guests of the house in terms of their footwear:

"Who there is in the house?" said Sam, in whose mind the inmates were always represented by that particular article of their costume, which came under his immediate superintendence. "There's a wooden leg in number six; there's a pair of Hessians in thirteen; there's two pair of halves in the commercial; there's these here painted tops in the snuggerly inside the bar; and five more tops in the coffee-room."

"Nothing more?" said the little man.

"Stop a bit", replied Sam, suddenly recollecting himself. "Yes; there's a pair of Wellingtons a good deal worn, and a pair o'lady's shoes, in number five." (PP, p. 205)

In this example Sam reveals his reliance on contiguity; his sense for similarity, on the other hand, manifests itself throughout the novel in the innumerable aphoristic analogies with which he is wont to illustrate idiomatic locutions and commonplace phrases:

"It's over and can't be helped, and that's one consolation, as they always say in Turkey, ven they cuts the wrong man's head off." (PP, p. 398)

Or, upon being introduced to a female servant:

"Wery glad to see you, indeed, and hope our acquaintance may be a long 'un, as the gen'lm'n said to the fi' pun' note." (PP, p. 433)

Sam is a veritable master at connecting hackneyed stock-phrases with corresponding situations in which they lose their staleness and become even the mot juste (or rather phrase juste) for that particular situation. What he does, in other words, is to take a phrase or locution that has become banal, almost "dead", one could say, and places it in a particular context in which the original meaning of that phrase is re-activated and revived. Sam's linguistic analogies then are strongly reminiscent of those conceived by the animist who also bestows life upon objects by placing them in a context of comparison with the human world. Metaphorically speaking, it could be said that on the verbal level Sam is an animist in his own right, one who animates "dead" phrases and idioms. His speciality, thus, is the animation of language - a truly poetic concern.

But literature, the poet's world, is also an imaginary, that is a fictive world, a world in which life in all its forms is entirely of the poet's invention, not of material reality. (By "poet" I do not merely refer to the lyric, but also to the epic and the dramatic writer.) How real is this fictive world then, or, to put it in "animistic" terms, how alive are an animist's animated objects?

This question, which touches one of the fundamental problems about the function and relevance of literature, is raised explicitly in another Dickens novel, The Old Curiosity Shop. In this novel we come across the strange couple, Codlin and Short, who for some time are the travelling companions of little Nell and her grandfather, and who eventually set Mr. Trent's brother on to their tracks. The two are itinerant puppet-players, that is, they are professionally concerned with the "animation" of wooden dolls. The scene of their first meeting with Nell and her grandfather is in many respects a significant one. For one thing, it takes place in a churchyard, a site dedicated to the dead and filled with the atmosphere of transition. This air of transition is strangely reflected in the wooden figure of Punch:

... perched crosslegged upon a tombstone behind them, was the figure of that hero himself, his nose and chin as hooked and his face as beaming as usual. Perhaps his imperturbable character was never more strikingly developed, for he preserved his usual equable smile, notwithstanding that his body was dangling in a most uncomfortable position, all loose and limp and shapeless, while his long peaked cap, unequally balanced against his exceedingly slight legs, threatened every instant to bring him toppling down. (OCS, pp. 180 - 182)

Just as the human bodies buried in this churchyard were once vessels of life in the physical sense, so the wooden body of Punch at times becomes a vessel of life in the psychological sense, that is in the spectator's imagination; his ever-present smile, even in moments of inactivity, is a constant reference to this state of animation. His animation, however, depends on two conditions: on the one hand, on the human being who moves him and speaks for him; on the other hand, on the spectator's "willing suspension of disbelief", that is his readiness to cooperate and perceive in the animated puppet not a wooden object but a living being. Puppet play is a play on illusion, and the two players in the novel carry the illusion so far as to retire to the solitary churchyard to mend some tears in their puppets' apparel. Short explains this to Nell and her grandfather:

"Why you see", rejoined the little man, "we're putting up for tonight at the public-house yonder, and it wouldn't do to let 'em see the present company undergoing repair."

"No!" cried the old man, making signs to Nell to listen, "why not, eh? Why not?"

"Because it would destroy all the delusions, and take away all the interest, wouldn't it?" replied the little man. "Would you care a ha'penny for the Lord Chancellor if you know'd him in private and without his wig? - certainly not." (OCS, pp. 182/183)

The phrase "present company undergoing repair" points in a humorous and accurate way to the "double life" these puppets lead. By using this phrase, Short betrays both his awareness of their object-nature and his playful acceptance of them as a "company" of actors. Without losing touch with reality, he nevertheless goes along with the illusion that he creates (with the puppet play) and accepts his puppets on an almost equal footing with himself. Not so his colleague Codlin, who sees in a puppet nothing but a wooden object and in a spectator merely an unbelieving onlooker. The diversity of their characters is borne out by the diversity of the functions each of them fulfils in the business. Short is the one who actually animates the puppets, that is, the one who lends them his hands and his voice, whereas Codlin's part is to stand in front of the puppet-stage and to talk - as a real person - with the puppets. Significantly, he stands outside the theatre and thereby outside the spell and magic of illusion. He claims that his knowledge of human nature is superior to Short's:

"If you stood in front of the curtain and see the public's faces as I do, you'd know human natur' better." (OCS, p. 183)

But Short shows his far deeper insight - into human nature in general and that of Codlin in particular - when he replies:

"Ah! it's been the spoiling of you, Tommy, you taking to that branch ... When you played the ghost in the reg'lar drama in the fairs, you believed in everything - except ghosts. But now you're a universal mistruster." (OCS, p. 183)

Codlin, then, is a "mistruster", a disbeliever (his first name, aptly enough, is "Tommy", that is "Thomas"), and his professional talk with the puppets almost manages to kill the animistic effect produced by Short during the performance:

And now Mr. Thomas Codlin, the misanthrope, after blowing away at the Pan's pipes until he was intensely wretched, took his station on one side of the checked drapery which concealed the mover of the figures, and putting his hands in his pockets, prepared to reply to all questions and remarks of Punch, and to make a dismal feint of being his most intimate private friend, of believing in him to the fullest and most unlimited extent, of knowing that he enjoyed day and night a merry and glorious existence in that temple, and that he was at all times and under every circumstance the same intelligent and joyful person that the spectators then beheld him. All this Mr. Codlin did with the air of a man who had made up his mind for the worst and was quite resigned; his eye slowly wandering about during the briskest repartee to observe the effect upon the audience, and particularly the impression made upon the landlord and landlady, which might be productive of very important results in connexion with the supper. (OCS, p. 185)

Codlin's attitude is that of the sophisticated sceptic, the enlightened disbeliever, and if he participates in the animistic act by talking to Punch, he does so merely for pragmatic reasons, and with his calculating mind on business. Short, on the other hand, not only "invests" his hands and his voice, but also - and this is ultimately more important - his heart in the puppet play.

As the further context of the novel shows, this distinction between the two players is extended to the level of human relationships. Short is the one who is seriously concerned about the fate of Nell and her grandfather. Codlin, on the contrary, suspects the two of being runaways; and although he keeps reassuring Nell anxiously that "Codlin's the friend, not Short", his interest in them is based purely on his speculation about the "finder's reward" he could gain by betraying them to those who might be in search of them. In the above quotation he is referred to as a "misanthrope", and thus the passage reveals one of the most fundamental convictions of Dickens's creed: namely that the animating person, the one who perceives the world and organizes his own life on the strength of imagination, is also, at the same time, a truly good and moral person; but the one who is unable to sustain an animistic attitude and unwilling to believe in the reality of animism (and of imaginative life in general) is at the same time unable to keep up a sincere and altruistic relationship with other human beings, and unwilling to open his heart to them and their sorrows.

It is in the notion of empathy (26) then, which becomes significant here, for empathy is the common source of animism as well as of human sympathy. This is very much in keeping with what Theodor Lipps, one of the pioneers on the subject of empathy, affirmed in his writings. According to him, the self-same attitude which enables us to project our feelings onto another person, also enables us to project our feelings onto inanimate matter. He considers animistic perception, therefore, as a natural as well as a useful phenomenon - useful in so far as it helps us to understand and appreciate our environment:

The humanization of objects makes us understand them on a human level. (27)

For Lipps, this empathetic attitude forms the necessary basis for any aesthetic appreciation of art, (28) a point, which, as we shall see below, figures implicitly in Dickens's use of animism, too.

In coming back to Short and Codlin, we might in fact call them key-figures in Dickens's animistic message. They demonstrate how animistic vision and charity (true charity, not that self-interested public institution which goes under the same name!) go hand in hand in Dickens's world; one could even go so far as to call the first a symptom or outward manifestation of the second, whereas lack of imagination in a character (and this implies an inability to see the world animistically) usually signifies inability to conceive fellow-feelings for another person.

At the same time it must be borne in mind that the two puppet-players - by means of their profession - are involved in a kind of literary creation.

(26) "Empathy" is a translation of the German word "Einfühlung"; it denotes the projection or insertion of one's feelings onto an object or another person, even to the point of identification. The study of empathy originated with Hermann Lotze, but was most fully developed in Theodor Lipps's treatise Asthetik.

(27) Theodor Lipps, Asthetik (Hamburg & Leipzig, 1903), vol. I, p. 164. (my translation)

(28) "Aesthetic contemplation, which generates aesthetic pleasure, always includes such an act of animation." Theodor Lipps, "Asthetik der Einfühlung", in: Psychologische Untersuchungen (Leipzig, 1912), p. 416. (my translation)

Their plays, after all, are a form of dramatic expression; they create - through the medium of language and acting figures - an artificial world which claims to be an imitation of real life. Needless to say, Codlin, who is in every sense of the word "outside" of the theatre, is also excluded from the process of literary creation; in fact, as the quotation on p. 135 shows, he is even detrimental to it. Short, on the other hand, represents the truly poetic mind - the one who is both capable of creating and of transmitting his creative message to others. Thus, in the character of Short, charity is linked with animistic creativity and true poetic potential. (29)

We now come to that novel which probably contains the most lucid expression of the interdependence between these three qualities. This novel, possibly Dickens's most controversial, which found its acceptance into the approved canon only after F.R. Leavis had written his highly laudatory "Analytical Note" about it, proves to be a veritable mine of information and illustration as far as the topic of animism is concerned. Hard Times is essential to our study, as it is the novel in which Dickens most explicitly discusses the function and relevance of an animistic and thereby imaginative approach to life. It is a novel about utilitarianism, a movement whose doctrine is based upon the sole consideration of facts and the total neglect of anything else. It is, accordingly, at the very beginning of the novel that the monotheism of facts is hammered into the heads of the school-children (and of the readers) by Thomas Gradgrind (another doubting Thomas, by the way!):

"Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service for them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the

- (29) Dickens made a clear distinction between "true" and "untrue" or sham poets, as his treatment of Harold Skimpole, the ridiculous bard in Bleak House, shows. Skimpole (who is generally believed to be a caricature of Leigh Hunt) is clearly an absurd phrase-monger with no poetical capacity whatsoever. Significantly enough, his false pretensions are combined with a considerable indifference to human fate and a particularly uncharitable attitude.

principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!"
(HT, p. 47)

The gospel of Facts (the word is even capitalized in the text, to emphasize its importance) is the governing principle in the lives of Gradgrind and his friends and disciples. No wonder that this is a society which knows "the price of everything and the value of nothing". This attitude implies the total negation of anything that might modify these facts or represent them somewhat differently. It is obvious, then, that such thinking is directly opposed to the workings of imagination or fancy. This is revealed in that eloquent scene in the schoolroom where Sissy Jupe - Girl Number Twenty, as Gradgrind calls her - tries to explain why she would like to have a carpet with flowers on it in her room:

"If you please, sir, I am very fond of flowers," returned the girl.

"And is that why you would put tables and chairs upon them and have people walking over them with heavy boots?"

"It wouldn't hurt them, sir. They wouldn't crush and wither, if you please, sir. They would be the pictures of what was very pretty and pleasant, and I would fancy -"

"Ay, ay, ay! But you mustn't fancy," cried the gentleman, quite elated by coming so happily to this point. "That's it! You are never to fancy." "You are not, Cecilia Jupe," Thomas Gradgrind solemnly repeated, "to do anything of that kind." (HT, p. 52)

This scene is important in several respects. It reflects in a nut-shell the opposition between two attitudes or philosophies that represents the central theme of this novel and forms the basis of all the conflicts in the plot: On the one hand, we have the utilitarian, fact-ridden party which discards fancy - even in its mere verbal usage - as a taboo. On the other hand we have Sissy Jupe, a horse-rider's daughter, who comes from a social group that lives in, and is dedicated to, the realm of imagination. As Sissy convincingly demonstrates, a person who lets himself be led by imagination is not necessarily out of touch with reality; on the contrary: her argument that flowers on the carpet could not be impaired by tables and heavy boots since they could not crush or wither after all, is as sound and logical as the teacher's is absurd in citing his objections against the choice of such a carpet.

But Sissy's true antagonist is not Gradgrind, nor the teacher, Mr. M'Choakumchild, but Bitzer, the model pupil of Gradgrind's school, who has mastered the utilitarian doctrine from early youth and is able to describe a horse in terms of pure facts:

"Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth." (HT, p. 50)

Sissy on the other hand, who has spent her whole life among horse-riders and knows more about horses than most other people, is unable to define a horse; and Mr. Gradgrind's comment following Bitzer's definition

"Now Girl Number Twenty ..., you know what a horse is",

is profoundly ironical. David Sonstroem calls Bitzer's definition of a horse a "paper-horse", (30) and indeed, the mechanization of everything living is the direct result of the utilitarian school. Mr. Gradgrind's referring to pupils by numbers instead of their names is an extremely forceful manifestation of this. The opposition between Sissy and Bitzer really represents a clash between the life-assertive and the life-denying powers, and the narrator himself, by means of an ingenious device, illustrates this contrast:

... the boys and girls sat on the face of the inclined plane in two compact bodies, divided up the centre by a narrow interval; and Sissy, being at the corner of a row on the sunny side, came in for the beginning of a sunbeam, of which Bitzer, being at the corner of a row on the other side, a few rows in advance, caught the end. But, whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired, that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun, when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he even possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face. His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white. (HT, pp. 49/50)

(30) David Sonstroem, "Fettered Fancy in Hard Times", in: PMLA, vol. 84, Nr. 3 (May 1968), p. 524.

While Bitzer, and with him Gradgrind and the whole school of utilitarianism, thus stand for the negation of life, Sissy represents the animating power. She prefers a carpet with flowers and wall-paper with horses on it to a sober, practical and unimaginative environment. Where Bitzer accomplishes the highest utilitarian feat by reducing a horse, the epitome of vitality, to a sum of lifeless facts, Sissy succeeds in achieving the exact opposite: she manages to insert life into one of the chief instruments of utilitarianism - statistics (which, in a meaningful malapropism, she calls "stutterings"). Thus, when called upon to quote the proportion resulting from twenty-five starving people out of a total of one million well-fed citizens, her answer is that "it must be just as hard upon those who were starved, whether the others were a million, or a million million." (HT, p. 97) Whereas utilitarian practice is mechanizing in its tendency to reduce people to numbers, Sissy animates statistics by replacing the figures with individual human beings. In a similar episode, Sissy has to make a calculation about the percentage of accidents at sea:

"... I find [Mr. M'Choakumchild said] that in a given time a hundred thousand persons went to sea on long voyages, and only five hundred of them were drowned or burnt to death. What is the percentage? And I said, Miss;" here Sissy fairly sobbed as confessing with extreme contrition to her greatest error; "I said it was nothing."

"Nothing, Sissy?"

"Nothing, Miss - to the relations and friends of the people who were killed. I shall never learn," said Sissy. (HT, pp. 97/98)

The unspoken truth is, of course, that Sissy does not have to learn, because she already knows the most important lesson by heart (in the literal sense!). Sissy thus shows herself not only capable of animating dead matter, but at the same time also displays a strong potential of love and fellow-feeling. Imagination and human kindness are once again - as in the figure of Short (cf. p. 135), combined, and this not only in the character of Sissy, but likewise in the whole group of Sleary's horse-riding circus. David Sonstroem gives credit to this point (31) and F.R. Leavis writes:

- (31) "In ... several ways Dickens pits both imaginative play and fellow-feeling against Fact." Sonstroem, p. 526.

Sissy stands for vitality as well as goodness - they are in fact seen as one. (32)

"Vitality" in this context does not merely mean the possession and display of life, but also the creative energy by which life is passed on to the environment by means of fancy or imagination. It means the radiance of life both in the physical and in the figurative (that is animistic) sense.

The idea that fancy is closely connected with the emotional life is ironically enough expressed by Thomas Gradgrind, when he refers to love as something "fanciful, fantastic, or (I am using synonymous terms) sentimental" (HT, p. 133). By depriving Louisa of her imaginative powers, he makes her unable to realize that a marriage entered upon without love on either side must end in disaster. She is thus the victim of her father's philosophy.

Sissy, on the other hand, brings love, life, and imagination into the factual Gradgrind world. These are qualities and powers that cannot be measured in scientific terms, as Mrs. Gradgrind's inability to name them shows:

"You learnt a great deal, Louisa, and so did your brother. Ologies of all kinds from morning to night. If there is any Ology left, or any description that has not been worn to rags in this house, all I can say is, I hope I shall never hear its name...

But there is something - not an Ology at all - that your father has missed, or forgotten, Louisa. I don't know what it is. I have often sat with Sissy near me, and thought about it. I shall never get its name now." (HT, p. 225)

Sleary's horse-riding people share in this magic circle of love, life and imagination, and it is through these qualities that they are able in the end to help young Tom Gradgrind escape from a merciless (read fact-bound) justice.

There is, however, in addition to charity and vitality, a further level of meaning attached to Sissy and Sleary's people. Their world, after all, represents the world of art. Art has no place whatever in the utilitarian

(32) F.R. Leavis, "Hard Times - An Analytic Note", in: The Great Tradition (London, 1973), p. 231.

world. This becomes evident in Thomas Gradgrind's statement that "taste is only another name for Fact". (HT, p. 51) The experience and study of art has therefore been completely banished from the young Gradgrinds' education; among other things, they have never been confronted with poetry. Indeed, when their father catches them peeping at the circus through a loophole, he states: "I should as soon have expected to find my children reading poetry." (HT, p. 61) Not even nursery-rhymes, the commonest and most universal form of literature, are familiar to them:

No little Gradgrind had ever associated a cow in a field with that famous cow with the crumpled horn who tossed the dog who worried the cat who killed the rat who ate the malt, or with that yet more famous cow who swallowed Tom Thumb: it had never heard of those celebrities, and had only been introduced to a cow as a graminivorous, ruminating quadruped with several stomachs. (HT, p. 54)

Sissy and Sleary's people, on the other hand, appreciate and participate in the experience of art. Sissy used to read to her father "about the Fairies ... and the Dwarf, and the Hunchback, and the Genies". (HT, p. 89) But she is not only a consumer of literature - and thereby of art - (however "low" its literary merit may be), but by means of her animistic attitude betrays universal artistic sensitivity. Her animation of statistics is essentially comparable to the activity of a poet. Where other people see numbers, she perceives - as a poet might - behind these numbers the figures and fates of those people who make up the statistical results. She manages to revert the utilitarian process of abstraction by filling an abstract concept with concrete reality. F.R. Leavis appreciates this point when he writes:

Sissy Jupe, who might be taken here for a merely conventional persona, has already, as a matter of fact, been established in a potentially symbolic role: she is part of the poetically-creative operation of Dickens's genius in Hard Times. (33)

Extending the concept of poetry and literature to that of art, the same, although in a more general sense, can be said about Sleary's horse-riding

(33) Leavis, p. 230.

group. (34) They are, after all, "artists", and this in the truest sense of the word. To be sure, they are no learned experts, for as the narrator tells us - "the combined literature of the whole company would have produced but a poor letter on any subject". (HT, p. 77) But they all have acquired certain skills with which they are able to entertain and delight other people:

The father of one of the families was in the habit of balancing the father of another of the families on top of a great pole; the father of a third family often made a pyramid of both those fathers, with Master Kidderminster for the apex, and himself for the base; all the fathers could dance upon rolling casks, stand upon bottles, catch knives and balls, twirl hand-basins, ride upon anything, jump over everything, and stick at nothing. All the mothers could (and did) dance, upon the slack wire and the tight rope, and perform acts on barebacked steeds... (HT, p. 77)

What these skills have in common with animism is the fact that they all somehow or other seem to break the physical laws of reality, and to strive for the presentation of the (seemingly) impossible. Although never completely out of touch with the solid ground of reality (as the image of the human pyramid in the above passage shows), these artists constantly and playfully soar away from this ground into their world of illusion and make-believe. In this respect they are like children, a point which is explicitly commented on by the narrator:

Yet there was a remarkable gentleness and childishness about these people, a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another, deserving, often of as much respect, and always of as much generous construction, as the everyday virtues of any class of people in the world. (HT, p. 77)

This is a significant passage, for it expresses the interdependence Dickens perceived between the child's mentality, natural goodness, and the notion of imaginative and artistic creativity. Although possessing various skills, these artists have "a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice", that is they are - mentally - as innocent as children. They have the kind

(34) Bert Hornback writes in this context: "The horse-riding is Dickens's curious choice for representing the attitudes and values of art in the novel." From: "Noah's Arkitecture": A Study of Dickens's Mythology (Athens, Ohio, 1972), p. 115.

of innocence that is being murdered by the utilitarian doctrine, as the heading of the second chapter ("Murder of the Innocents") and Mr. M'Choakum-child's name suggest. This innocence consists in their readiness to accept life on playful terms and without pursuit of any ulterior motives. It also consists in their readiness to wonder and believe rather than to know, an attitude which is strictly suppressed by utilitarianism, as the following episode makes clear:

When she was half-a-dozen years younger, Louisa had been overheard to begin a conversation with her brother one day, by saying "Tom, I wonder" - upon which Mr. Gradgrind, who was the person overhearing, stepped forth into the light and said, "Louisa, never wonder!" (HT, p. 89)

Whereas the thirst of knowledge and control grows from pride, the capacity for wonder is fundamentally rooted in humility and thus allows for the cultivation of charitable feeling. The connection between the ability to wonder and the ability to love is explicitly established by Sleary when he tells Mr. Gradgrind about the "miraculous" reappearance of the dog Merrylegs:

"It theemth to prethent two things to a perthion, don't it, Thquire?" said Mr. Sleary, musing as he looked down into the depths of his brandy and water: "one, that there ith a love in the world, not all t'elf-interetht after all, but thomething very different; t'other, that it hath a way of ith own of calculating or not calculating, with thome-how or another ith ath leatht ath hard to give a name to, ath the wayth of the dogth ith!" (HT, p. 308)

Illiterate as Sleary may be, his words are a clear echo of Hamlet's "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy". They thus formulate a distinct antithesis to Gradgrind's philosophy of facts.

What the horse-riders in their simplicity and goodness are deeply aware of is the importance which artistic entertainment assumes in the lives of hard-working people. They realize the fundamental need for an equilibrium between work and play, particularly if the working conditions are as mechanizing as those of the Coketown hands. The circus people's activity is really a battle against mental and spiritual starvation. As Sleary points out to Thomas Gradgrind:

"People mutht be amuthed. They can't be alwayth a learning, nor yet they can't be alwayth a working, they an't made for it." (HT, p. 308)

These horse-riders are clearly artists for the sake of entertainment. Their art is as free of self-interest as their human relationships are. They have discovered the universal law that art is an end in itself and its own reward; in this sense they represent - not only in the literal, but in the broadest possible sense - the artistic side in our world. In them the artist's attitude to life and his commitment to aesthetic values is reflected.

If we bear in mind Dickens's urgent plea for the importance of fancy and his continuous campaign in favour of a more imaginative approach to life, we can safely assume that Sleary and his horse-riders are the spokesmen for Dickens's personal views. In other words, we find behind these literary characters the novelist Dickens, who reveals his personal ideas about his own craft (that is art) by means of the product of this craft. And if we go back to Sissy Jupe, who is the most central as well as the most refined member of the horse-riding circus, we can see how her view of the world, which is animistically imaginative, characterizes her ultimately as a source of poetic energy. Animism, seen in this light, becomes an expression of the poetic potential.

Sissy and Sleary's horse-riders are the missionaries who carry the message of poetry and art into the prosaic, matter-of-fact world of utilitarianism. This poetic mission is already hinted at early in the novel by way of the highly suggestive name of the public house where the circus people have put up - the "Pegasus Arms". The name is doubly significant in this context: on the one hand, the winged pegasus, as the mythological attribute of the poet, introduces the poetical dimension - connected with the horse-riding business - into the novel; on the other hand, it represents yet another variation of the horse-motif, which, from the beginning to the end of the book, reappears as a life-asserting symbol.

That the animistic cause is ultimately the poet's cause is even more explicitly demonstrated by the narrator's use of a language which stands in ironic

contrast to the utilitarian motto of "calling a spade a spade". (HT, p. 74)
(35) The narrator of Hard Times becomes impetuously animistic when he is talking about the city of Coketown:

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but, as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monstrously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. (HT, p. 65)

The impression evoked by this description of Coketown is not so much that of a civilized dwelling-place but rather that of a jungle. Its surface structure is compared to an over-dimensional voodoo mask and its implements are referred to in terms of animal-imagery - and of wild and dangerous animals at that. There is, as I said, irony in this emphasized usage of figurative rather than factual language; but behind the irony there is a strong element of truth in this sketch of Coketown, for it captures exactly the atmosphere of the primitive, uncultivated, threatening and man-eating world that Coketown really is. The serpents and mad elephants reappear at every further reference to Coketown, thus maintaining the image of the city-dweller who is exposed to the mighty and threatening machines as to beasts.

In an analogous way, though with reciprocal imagery, the narrator produces a truthful and expressive picture of the Gradgrind world by referring to it in purely mechanistic terms. Mr. Bounderby is characterized by his "metallic" laughter, Louisa Gradgrind is referred to as "metallurgical", and Thomas Gradgrind himself is described as a "square" man in every respect:

- (35) Notice, by the way, how accurately this motto answers Ruskin's description of the "men who are not poets at all": "the man who perceives rightly, because he does not feel, and to whom the primrose is very accurately the primrose, because he does not love it." "Of the Pathetic Fallacy", p. 209.

... the speaker's [Gradgrind's] square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the school-master's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellerage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders, - nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was, - all helped the emphasis. (HT, p. 47)

This mechanizing and thereby figurative description of a human being is very ironic, particularly as it is set right in the middle of Thomas Gradgrind's decalogue of factual commandments. The narrator deals in the same way with the other utilitarians in the novel. If they are not mechanized into matter, they come in for a good deal of animal imagery: Bitzer is compared to an insect, Mrs. Sparsit to a dragon, and young Tom in the second half of the book is merely referred to as "the whelp", an epithet coined by Harthouse, but immediately adopted by the narrator himself. By means of his mechanizing imagery, Dickens reveals both the mechanistic and mechanizing aspects of utilitarianism, whose disciples not only act like lifeless automata themselves, but also deny life - if not in the physical, so at least in the spiritual sense - to the people around them.

Thus animism (and, by inversion, mechanization) furnish Dickens's comment on the philosophy of facts. In this philosophy he sees not only an enemy against humanity and humane feelings, but also a power opposing the development and expansion of the imaginative faculties and thus of art in the human world. Bert Hornback accurately formulates the lesson Hard Times tries to teach its readers:

The lessons of the story ... are that love is the only thing that can save us, and that art and the works of the imagination, however strange and impractical and useless they may seem, are intimately connected with the life of love. (36)

By combining the qualities of charity and artistic creativity, Dickens makes an implicit statement about the important role art in general - and literature in particular - plays within the social context. Art thus has to be regarded not only as a by-product nor as a marginal feature of human life, but rather as the medium by means of which the bridge of communication and understanding can be built between human beings. This bridge, however, must be based upon minds which are open to wonder and belief, a disposition which is ultimately revealed in an animistic view of the world.

CONCLUSION

It is with the recognition that animism may turn from a medium into a message that I should like to conclude my study of animation and mechanization in Dickens's novels. Let me, though in a brief retrospect, sum up the most important observations that we were able to make in the course of this study.

As we saw, there are basically two criteria which enable Dickens to compare objects to living (mostly human) beings and to turn people into mechanical objects:

The first criterion is physical resemblance. Thus, portraits, clothes, pieces of furniture, and even houses display - to a stronger or lesser degree - certain physical or anatomical correspondences to human beings, an aspect which is constantly exploited by Dickens's animistic disposition. Likewise, objects that have been invested with the capacity of movement - such as clocks, fountains, and engines - are a permanent challenge to him. Not only are these objects animated by being referred to or even fully described in terms of human and (less frequently) animal designations; at times they are also accorded a motoric energy of their own which is usually directed in malignant opposition to human intentions. In a reciprocal way, human beings may be compared to objects on the grounds of some physical analogy, such as shape or texture.

The second is psychological analogy. Thus, objects may be made to look and behave like the people who own them, thereby participating in their specific eccentricities and idiosyncrasies. Conversely, people are frequently described as if they were lifeless objects. There are two main reasons for this. Either they are treated by other characters as if they were mere articles or implements to be handled and disposed of at will in a total deprivation of their human dignity. Their helplessness is thus illustrated by means of the mechanizing imagery Dickens uses with reference to them. On the other hand, characters may be described in mechanizing terms because

they lack essential human qualities, such as love, warmth, understanding, and imagination; their rigidity, coldness and indifference hence is accurately captured in their metaphoric transformation into stone, wood or metal imagery.

A frequent variation on the theme of mechanization is Dickens's metonymic reduction of a human being to any particular part of his body, or - on a more abstract level - to a typical phrase or gesture. This technique of hypostatization is also often the basis for animistic effects, for instance if a person's arms or legs seem to develop a life of their own, thus standing in conflict with that person as a whole.

On the rhetorical level, these transpositions between life and matter are achieved basically by the devices of simile, metaphor and metonymy. All the comparisons between things and people are expressed either by means of similes and metaphors. If we look at Dickens's novels from a diachronic point of view, we find that the development from his early to his later novels reflects a change in his language from a predominant use of simile to that of metaphor, a change which is also noticeable in his use of animistic and mechanizing comparisons. Metonymy, on the other hand, can be found in all those instances where a single human feature is made to stand for the whole person, or where, conversely, a whole group or community of people is referred to as one single character as in the case of Saint Antoine in A Tale of Two Cities, or Tom-All-Alone's in Bleak House.

We have also witnessed the variety of literary functions and significance with which Dickens's animating and mechanizing imagery may be filled.

There is, for one thing, a variety in tone. Animation and mechanization are often used for the sake of humour, introducing the notions of the ridiculous, the absurd, or the playfully comic into a given context. They may also be used as vehicles for satire, combining the elements of the ridiculous and the absurd with a critical intention. Furthermore, if animation of objects and mechanization of characters exploit the effects of the ridiculous and the absurd, they may, in addition, very often contain an uncanny and

even frightening element. This mixture of the ludicrous with the fearful results in the creation of a grotesque atmosphere, a feature which, to a lesser or stronger degree, can be found in all of Dickens's novels. Furthermore, we have seen how Dickens's use of animating and mechanizing imagery largely contributes to the symbolic content of his novels.

If there is a variety in tone among Dickens's examples of animation and mechanization, there is also one with respect to the degree of their structural significance within a given novel. Very frequently Dickens makes spontaneous use of his animistic device, merely for the enjoyment of converting matter into life and life into matter. This is particularly the case in his humorous animations and mechanizations. On the other hand, certain animistic and mechanizing images have the tendency to reappear consistently within a particular novel, thus assuming the function and significance of a leitmotif. Especially in Dickens's later novels, animation and mechanization are frequently connected with a particular theme or even the main theme of the novel and contribute considerably to the symbolic density of these novels.

Finally, we were able to observe how Dickens makes explicit use of his animistic and mechanizing technique in order to express his views about the necessity of an imaginative approach to life. Such an imaginative attitude can be found among Dickens's characters in the figures of the child, of the madman, of the dreamer and ultimately the poet (or, by extension, the artist). All of these share an uninhibited enjoyment of their animistic and hence imaginative faculties, which outweigh their rational powers. From the point of view of a literary study, it is certainly the figure of the poet which attracts our particular attention in this context, for it provides us with an insight into Dickens's view of his own craft as a writer. Although none of the characters dealt with in this context is a professional poet, we find the poetic principle in the figure of Sam Weller, who animates "dead" language, in the puppet-player Short, who creates an imaginary world by animating his puppets, and ultimately in the characters of Sissy Jupe and Sleary's horse-riders, who introduce life and artistic enjoyment into the mechanized world of Coketown.

We find, however, that the poetical element is also present to a certain extent in the other animistic figures. Thus there are undeniable parallels between a child's conception of the world and that of a poet. Both perceive things and people with a mind largely unimpeded by rational thinking; being uninhibited by any striving for scientific knowledge, they both are capable of wondering and believing. They are thus able to retain their natural innocence in a predominantly utilitarian environment, which in their eyes, however, is filled with a magic of its own. Their innocence is at the same time the source of their imaginative freedom and their fundamental goodness. In presenting us the child as an example for emulation, Dickens echoes a well-known motif from the Bible; however, by connecting the notion of natural goodness inseparably with that of imaginative thinking and feeling and thus with a poetic (or artistic) potential, he gives a very specific and typically Dickensian interpretation of that motif.

The parallel between the poet and the madman is another well-known motif, one which is of long standing in literature. Plato's descriptions in Ion and Phaedros of the poet as a man in a frenzy, "obsessed" by his poetic inspiration, was an image which was readily accepted by the poets of the Renaissance and perpetuated by their literary successors. Theseus' description of a poet in A Midsummer Night's Dream (1) and Coleridge's portrayal of the poet in "Kubla Khan" (2) are among the most famous examples in English literature. In Dickens's novels, the mad characters are generally endowed with a marked animistic sense of perception. The most

- (1) "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;"
William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, 1, 12/13
(The New Shakespeare, ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John
Dover Wilson), (Cambridge, 1968), p. 60.
- (2) "His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise."
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan", ll. 50 - 54, The Complete
Poetical Works of S.T. Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge
(Oxford, 1912), p. 298.

illustrious example among them is Barnaby Rudge, whose madness is defined precisely by his animistic disposition; but he also recognizes the pleasure and mental richness which can be derived from such imaginative freedom. His eloquent acceptance of his animistic disposition contains an explicit appreciation of the function and significance of art in life. (3) In addition, Barnaby, like the figure of the child in Dickens's work, combines his strong imaginative and hence poetical faculty with fundamental and natural goodness.

The poetical element may also be found in the figure of the dreamer. The affinities between art and dreams present both a popular and a fascinating field for research and interpretations; again we come across a theme here which has been explored before in the literary tradition. The notion of dreams as source of poetic (or artistic) inspiration was, for instance, particularly cherished during the Romantic movement. Dickens's dreaming characters all experience animistic and thus poetic visions; in addition, these animistic visions almost always embody a specific lesson or moral message; thus, again, the concepts of imaginative freedom and of moral integrity are inseparably connected.

In short, then, it is not merely those characters who are directly involved in the poetic or artistic process of creation that illustrate Dickens's views on the ethical and the poetic or artistic significance of an animistic vision; indeed his imaginative and poetic message is also expressed by his other animistic characters, such as the child, the madman, and the dreamer.

- (3) There is, by the way, a striking correspondence between Dickens's description of Barnaby and the above quoted portrayal of poets by Shakespeare, and particularly Coleridge: "His hair, of which he had a great profusion, was red, and hanging in disorder about his face and shoulders, gave to his restless looks an expression quite unearthly - enhanced by the paleness of his complexion, and the glassy lustre of his large protruding eyes." (BR, pp. 73/74)

It is with these observations that I should like to conclude my study of Dickens's use of animation and mechanization in his novels. I hope to have succeeded in pointing out both the prominence which this stylistic feature enjoys in Dickens's writings, and the complexity of the functions and meanings that are attached to it. I also hope to have shown that with respect to Dickens-scholarship the topic is not only of marginal, but of central relevance; for, like a prism, this special device of animation and mechanization captures and reflects the whole spectrum of those particular qualities which - animistically speaking - make up the true Dickensian spirit in his work.

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